

THE CHESSMEN
A Play in Three Acts
by
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This Thesis for the M. A. degree

by

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PREFACE

"The Chessmen" began as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of a course in playwriting conducted at the University of Utah by Mr. Robert Hyde Wilson. The first draft of the play was completed at that time. Since then the play has been produced and revised to fulfill thesis requirements. In the play it has been the aim of the author to consider this question: Should a man be allowed to use his military power and authority to pursue his own private ends at the expense of others? The intention has been to show the effects of that ambition on the men who must pay for it. The title of the play was selected to reveal the author's focus on the men who become pawns to another's personal ambitions; the chessmen become the dominant symbol in the play.

Colonel Bryan, through implication, is the man who plays chess. He is a character who in many respects is outside of the play and it has been the author's desire to keep him there. Little is said concerning his motivations or character development because they are of negligible importance; the important thing is Bryan's effect upon the other characters of the play. We see that effect in the enlisted men and the other officers who are the chessmen. Each man represents a varying degree of involvement with the problem of Bryan's ambition. Ferrin senses the truth about Bryan

but to him it means little more than personal discomfort; consequently, his major reaction is a mild verbal complaint. When the raid ends his discomfort ends with it and he can go to sleep. Morgan realizes the problem but is emotionally confused by it and can offer at best only a passive resistance until he is emotionally--if not mentally--destroyed by it. Of the enlisted men, Walters has the greatest grasp of the moral implications of the problem; however, due to the military code, he is powerless to do anything about it other than express his views verbally in the hope of arousing someone else to action. He can do his job to the best of his ability --even if it entails going into No Man's Land with Jackson-- in order to prevent as much harm as possible.

Lieutenant Jackson is fully aware of the extent of Bryan's ambition. He knows something should be done about it; but he is not certain just what action he should take. He senses the urgency to awaken Fabian to the truth. Fabian, due to his position as company commander, is closer to the emergency of the battlefront situation. Consequently, he is somewhat blinded to Bryan's ambitions. The play reveals Fabian's realization of the truth. He is the one man who can act on the power of his convictions. Once he knows that Bryan's only concern is his personal gain, he acts to remove the threat that Bryan represents. But in destroying Bryan he realizes that he will destroy himself because, although

the death of the Colonel may be morally justified, it is a breach of military law. Fabian acts with an awareness of the consequences of his action.

The production of "The Chessmen" was a revelation of the course that subsequent rewritings must follow. It proved many interesting points--not the least of which is that a playwright is possibly the worst judge of what is good and what is bad in his own script until he can see it performed on a stage and until the writing has grown cold enough that he can approach his play objectively. One scene--the climax of the first act of the original script--which seemed highly effective in writing was not only ineffective but meaningless in production and, consequently, was dropped from the second draft of the play. The drinking scene in the second act was especially lifeless in writing and yet proved to be one of the more playable scenes in the production.

The production quickly pointed out the strength and inadequacies of the play. The original first act contained two scenes the first of which was almost straight exposition which was unexciting and unmoving on the stage. In the second draft the second scene became the core of the first act and parts--about one-third--of the first scene were incorporated into the one scene. It was evident from the production that the lines of conflict between Bryan and the men--and particularly Bryan and Fabian--were confused and muddled

by too many intervening scenes and a certain circumlocution within the speeches. This was rectified by "red pencilling" parts of some speeches, reorganizing the sequence of scenes and clarifying character relationships. In the original draft of the play, two sets were employed--one depicting the fire direction hootchie and the other Bryan's private dugout. Bryan never came into contact with the men with the exception of Fabian. Bryan was removed from the men and, consequently, the conflict between them was weakened. The short scene that begins the present draft was written before the play was performed to correct this lack of contact. In subsequent revisions one set was employed thereby bringing Bryan into contact with the men.

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Above all, the author's thanks go to Mr. Robert Hyde Wilson who was the first to see the possibilities of the play as thesis material. His constant encouragement and unfailing assistance have been major contributions to the conception and completion of the manuscript. His guidance through the preparation of this script and others has been gratefully appreciated.

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THE CHESSMEN

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by

Lowell Lyndon Manfull

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Colonel Bryan

Captain Fabian

Lieutenant Jackson

M/Sergeant Walters

Sergeant Ferrin

Sergeant Morgan

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action takes place near the front lines in Korea during the latter part of March, 1952.

ACT I: The fire direction hootchie of a heavy mortar company.
About noon.

ACT II:

Scene 1. The Same. An hour later.

Scene 2. The Same. Three days later. About six o'clock in the morning.

ACT III: The Same. About one thirty the following morning.

ACT I

ON STAGE IS THE FIRE DIRECTION "HOOTCHIE" OF A HEAVY MORTAR COMPANY. IT IS A LARGE ROOM DUG OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN SIDE. ITS WALLS ARE ROUGH LOGS, SANDBAGS AND BARE EARTH. NEAR THE CENTER OF THE ROOM IS A LARGE TABLE CRUDELY PATCHED WITH MISCELLANEOUS BOARDS AND CLUTTERED WITH AN ARRAY OF COMPUTING EQUIPMENT, REPAIR TOOLS AND A DISMANTLED F-600 FIELD RADIO. OVER THE TABLE IS A SINGLE ELECTRIC LIGHT BULB DANGLING FROM A DROP CORD. THE SINGLE DOOR--AN OPENING SUPPORTED BY LOGS AND DRAPED WITH CANVAS--IS IN THE RIGHT WALL. A LARGE CONTOUR MAP OF THE FRONT IS VISIBLE ON THE LEFT WALL OPPOSITE THE DOOR. IN THE HOOTCHIE ARE THREE MAKE-SHIFT SLEEPING BUNKS, AN OIL-BURNING STOVE WHICH IS NOTHING MORE THAN A CONVERTED OIL DRUM, AND SEVERAL BOXES WHICH SERVE AS CHAIRS. ON THE STOVE IS A LARGE FRUIT CAN--THE COFFEE POT AND WASH BASIN. NEAR THE BUNKS ARE HUNG THE OCCUPANT'S JACKET, MESS-KIT, CARBINE, HELMET, ETC. THE HOOTCHIE IS DIMLY LIGHTED AND THE CORNERS ARE CAST IN HEAVY SHADOWS EVEN DURING THE DAY. WHAT LIGHT THERE IS SEEMS TO COME FROM THE ONE LIGHT BULB AND FROM THE DOOR WHEN THE CANVAS IS PUSHED ASIDE. THE RAIN AND OVERCAST SKY MAKE THE GLOOM EVEN MORE APPARENT DURING MOST SCENES.

AS THE CURTAIN RISES, WALTERS IS DISCOVERED ON HIS BUNK TAKING A MID-MORNING NAP. MORGAN IS SITTING BY THE STOVE, HIS HELMET AT HIS FEET, BUSILY WASHING HIS SOCKS AND UNDERWEAR. FERRIN SITS AT THE RIGHT END OF THE TABLE REPAIRING THE DISMANTLED RADIO. DROPS OF RAIN WATER FALL PERIODICALLY FROM THE CEILING ONTO THE TABLE IN FRONT OF HIM. HE WIPES THE WATER AWAY WITH AN ANGRY HAND AND CONTINUES WITH HIS WORK. PRESENTLY, HE WIPES AWAY ANOTHER DROP OF RAIN AND LOOKS UP AT THE CEILING OVER HIS HEAD.

FERRIN

Goddam leakin' hole!

MORGAN LOOKS UP AT FERRIN AND THEN GOES BACK TO HIS LAUNDRY. PRESENTLY, THE DOOR FLAP IS MOVED ASIDE AND COLONEL BRYAN ENTERS AND STANDS EXPECTANTLY. FERRIN TURNS, SEES HIM, FREEZES MOMENTARILY. HE THEN JUMPS QUICKLY TO HIS FEET AND ALERTS THE OTHERS.

FERRIN

'Tention!

MORGAN RISES ABRUPTLY AND STANDS AT ATTENTION. WALTERS SLOWLY ROLLS OVER ON HIS BUNK TO SEE WHO HAS COME IN, SEES BRYAN QUICKLY JUMP TO HIS FEET. BRYAN EYES HIM.

BRYAN

At ease!

TO WALTERS.

Is that all you have to do, sergeant? Lie in bed? Maybe I could find you something to do. Would you like that?

WALTERS

No, sir! I mean...it's just that I was up all night, sir.

BRYAN

So you intend to sleep all day. Where can I find Captain Fabian?

WALTERS

(CALM NOW) He isn't here, sir.

BRYAN

I'm aware of that. Where is he?

FERRIN

Sir, he's out inspecting the platoons.

I-3

BRYAN

Oh. When do you expect him back, sergeant?

MORGAN

He may be back now, sir. I'll call his hootchie, if you like, and see if he's there.

BRYAN

I've just come from his hootchie and no one's up there.

MORGAN

Well, he should be back any minute now, sir, if you care to wait.

BRYAN

I haven't the time. I'm on my way to Fox Company now.

WALTERS

Is there a message I could give him, sir?

BRYAN

Tell him I'll be back here in an hour or so...and I'll see him then.

WALTERS

Yes, sir. Is there anything else...?

BRYAN

That's all.

BRYAN WALKS AROUND THE HOOTCHIE INSPECTING IT.

Who's in charge here?

WALTERS

I am, sir.

BRYAN

You'd better clean this place up, sergeant. You see, there

I-4

is something you can do besides lie in bed. Is there any food in those boxes under the bunks?

WALTERS

I don't believe so, sir.

BRYAN

You'd better find out damn quick and clean up in here. Otherwise you'll have every rat and rodent in the countryside living in here with you.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

BRYAN

That's how hemorrhagic fever gets started.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

BRYAN CONTINUES HIS INSPECTION OF THE HOOTCHIE.
HE STUDIES THE SITUATION MAP ON THE WALL.

BRYAN

(TO FERRIN) This your situation map?

FERRIN

Yes, sir.

BRYAN

Are you keeping it up to date?

WALTERS CROSSES TO THE MAP.

WALTERS

Yes, sir...(POINTEDLY)...when we get the data from regiment.

BRYAN

Aren't you getting the daily situation reports?

I-5

WALTERS

Not regularly, sir.

BRYAN

Why not? What's the matter?

WALTERS

I don't know, sir. The regimental messenger only comes around every other day or so.

BRYAN

Have you reported it to Captain Fabian?

WALTERS

Yes, sir, and he's checked with regiment about it...a number of times.

BRYAN

I'll check it myself. You'll get your reports, sergeant.

WALTERS

Thank you, sir.

BRYAN CONTINUES HIS INSPECTION. HE CROSSES TO THE TABLE WHERE FERRIN HAS BEEN WORKING ON THE RADIO.

BRYAN

What's wrong with the radio?

FERRIN

I don't know, sir. That's what I'm trying to find out.

FERRIN MAKES AN ATTEMPT AT A PLEASANT LAUGH.

BRYAN

Have you checked the battery?

FERRIN

Oh, yes, sir, the first thing. I think the radio itself is

just worn out.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT A PLEASANT LAUGH.

But I keep working on it anyway. Fact, I spend most of my time working on it.

BRYAN EYES FERRIN KNOWINGLY AND SPEAKS WITHOUT INTEREST.

BRYAN

That's the way, sergeant.

FERRIN

If you don't mind my saying so, sir, most of our communications equipment is pretty well worn out. It keeps you hoppin' to keep it in repair. What we need is....

BRYAN

(UNINTERESTED) I know, it's the same everywhere you go.

CROSSES TO THE DOOR.

Give Captain Fabian my message as soon as he gets back.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

BRYAN

And remember those boxes under the bunks.

WALTERS AND FERRIN

Yes, sir.

BRYAN EXITS. THERE IS A PAUSE AND THEN WALTERS SPITS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE DOOR.

MORGAN

Whew! Thank God!

WALTERS RETURNS TO HIS BUNK AND LIES DOWN.

I-7

WALTERS

The Gestapo.

MORGAN

(TO WALTERS--LAUGHING) What do you mean you were up all night? That was a bold-faced lie if ever I heard one.

WALTERS

(GRINNING) It sounded good, didn't it? Why didn't you warn me that he was coming?

MORGAN

There wasn't time. He was in here before we knew it.

FERRIN

The old bastard! Poking his nose into everything.

WALTERS

I noticed you getting in your browny points. To hell with him anyway.

WALTERS ROLLS OVER ON HIS BUNK AND GOES BACK TO SLEEP.

FERRIN

What do you mean by that!

MORGAN

(QUICKLY) He didn't mean nothing. Forget it. Well...do you think we ought to clean up this place.

FERRIN

Hell, no!

MORGAN

Just thought I'd ask.

THE DOOR FLAP IS PUSHED ASIDE AND LIEUTENANT JACKSON ENTERS.

I-8

MORGAN

Hello, Lieutenant Jackson.

FERRIN

Hi, Lieutenant.

JACKSON GRINS AND NODS AND WALKS OVER TO THE STOVE
SHAKING THE RAIN OFF OF HIMSELF.

JACKSON

I swear to God I've got webbed feet.

MORGAN

Still raining?

FERRIN

That's a stupid question.

WALTERS RAISES HIMSELF ON ONE ELBOW AND LOOKS TO
SEE WHO HAS COME IN.

WALTERS

Oh, 'lo, lieutenant.

JACKSON

For God's sake, Walters, go back to sleep. Man! That heat
feels good!....Was that Colonel Bryan I saw driving away?

FERRIN

Yah, he was in here a minute ago. You just missed him.

JACKSON

Good. That's the first stroke of luck I've had in weeks.

WALTERS

Why, Lieutenant, I thought you and the Colonel were buddy-
buddy.

JACKSON

Look out, Junior. Them's fightin' words.

INDICATES THE FRUIT CAN ON THE STOVE.

Coffee?

MORGAN

Yah, at least it's supposed to be.

MORGAN PICKS UP HIS CANTEEN CUP FROM THE TABLE AND
TOSSES IT TO JACKSON.

JACKSON

Thanks. Smells good.

JACKSON POURS HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE AND TASTES IT.

Ye gods! That's lousy. What is it?

FERRIN

It ain't been analysed yet. (INDICATING WALTERS) Old Sack Rat
didn't get the soap out of the pot the last time he washed his
socks.

MORGAN

Better check the pot. He probably left one of his socks in
it.

JACKSON

Hmmmm. It does taste a little thick.

WALTERS

Ah, bull! It's the best damn coffee you ever drank.

JACKSON

Want to bet. Hell, I've tasted axel grease that was better.

WALTERS STRETCHES OUT ON HIS BUNK AGAIN.

I-10

WALTERS

Well, I wouldn't know. I don't go around drinking axel grease.
(PAUSE) What are you doing back here anyway?

JACKSON

Oh, things were getting rather dull up at the platoon front, so I decided to drop in and have lunch with you. Any objections?

WALTERS

Yah, but none that would stop you. Let me tell you, you've just made the biggest mistake of your life.

JACKSON

How do you figure?

WALTERS

Lunch around here is no picnic in spite of the outdoor dining facilities. Stick around and we'll show you what a real war is like.

JACKSON

What do you mean a real war? You guys wouldn't know one if you saw it.

MORGAN

I don't know about that. We have some real excitement around here at chow-time. Don't we, Ferrin?

FERRIN

That's no lie. We see more war back here than you guys do smack on the front line.

JACKSON

Ha! Don't give me that. You've got it knocked and you know it. Hell, you guys are so far back you don't even know there's a war going on.

WALTERS

All right, all right! Have it your way. We tried to warn you. All we know is that everyday about noon the Chinks serve

I-11

us a nice helping of high explosive. Mortar shells galore.

MORGAN

They haven't missed a day in the past week.

JACKSON

No fooling?

FERRIN

No foolin'. It's the damndest thing. We must have a spy in the company 'cause no matter what time we eat, the Chinks know it and open up on us.

JACKSON

Hell, the only time you crawl out of your holes is at chow-time. It doesn't take a genius--or a spy--to figure that out.

MORGAN

Well, It's getting so you don't know what'll get you first--a mortar shell or the chow.

WALTERS

(LAUGHING) Old Ferrin's lost two meals already on account of the Chinks.

FERRIN MIMICS WALTERS' LAUGH.

FERRIN

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! That fat gut of yours wouldn't think it was so funny if it missed a meal or two.

WALTERS

I'm bleeding for you, boy, right from the navel. Well, if you'll excuse me....

WALTERS ROLLS OVER ON HIS BUNK AND PREPARES TO GO BACK TO SLEEP. JACKSON CROSSES TO WALTERS AND SLAPS HIM ON THE FANNY.

JACKSON

Man, aren't you ever going to get up?

I-12

WALTERS

Not if I can help it.

JACKSON

(GOOD-NATUREDLY) Seems everytime I come in here I find you flat on your back.

WALTERS

(YAWNING) I'm tired. I'm over-worked.

FERRIN

Ha! That'll be the day.

JACKSON

Quit your bleeding. You never had it so good and you know it. Hell, this place always looks like a goddam slumber party. I wish I could sack out once in a while.

WALTERS

Now who's bleeding?

WALTERS GROANS.

Ahhhhh! But I'm bushed. I had the late watch last night.

JACKSON

Late watch?

JACKSON WINKS AT MORGAN

I didn't know master sergeants pulled watch.

WALTERS

Well, it's not in the field manual, if that's what you mean.

FERRIN

With just the three of us to pull watch, he ain't got no choice.

ANOTHER DROP OF WATER FALLS FROM THE CEILING ONTO THE TABLE IN FRONT OF FERRIN AND HE ANGRILY BRUSHES IT AWAY.

Goddam it!

MORGAN

What we need in here is a few replacements.

JACKSON

Hell! One good man could replace the whole lot of you.

MORGAN

Even one would look good to me. Have you seen any replacements up on the line, Lieutenant?

JACKSON

A few. Fox Company got in about seven replacements the day before yesterday. So did Able Company from what I hear.

FERRIN

Think we'll get a few? They been telling us now for three months that we're going to get replacements. But I ain't seen hide nor hair of any yet. I don't know how the Christ they expect you to fight a war with only half a company. You just wait though. They'll fill up every rifle company in the division before we get a single replacement.

WALTERS

Naw. They divide them up.

FERRIN

(ANGRILY) The hell they do!

MORGAN

They do!

FERRIN

Ah, bull! The lieutenant just said they got some at Fox Company. But did we get any? No! You damn right we didn't! And we won't either until the rifle companies get their share first.

WALTERS

(TO FERRIN) Ah, simmer down, boy. At ease, at ease.

FERRIN

(ANGRILY) Get off it! You heard the lieutenant. You know damn well this'll be the last company to ever see a replacement.

MORGAN SPEAKS WITH FORCED LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS IN AN EFFORT TO PREVENT AN ARGUMENT BETWEEN FERRIN AND WALTERS.

MORGAN

Oh, there are ways. We can always take matters into our own hands. Hey, Lieutenant, why don't you swipe us a couple from Fox Company one of these dark nights?

JACKSON

Humph! I can't even steal enough oil for my stove, let alone a couple of replacements. It's not a bad idea though. Maybe I could steal me a computer. God knows I could use one and I'm not having any luck with you guys on that score. When are you going to get me a new computer, Walters? After all, that's your job.

WALTERS

(INNOCENTLY) Why? What's wrong with the one you've got?

JACKSON

Barker? I'll tell you what's wrong with him. His head rattles. He doesn't know a mortar from a pea-shooter.

WALTERS

(LAUGHING) Ah, Barker's all right.

JACKSON

The hell you say. He can't add two and two without getting five.

MORGAN

That sounds like Barker all right.

I-15

JACKSON

I don't dare leave him alone for five minutes at a time. Any minute I expect him to compute a mission backwards and blow up the whole platoon.

WALTERS

And then you'd be out of a job.

JACKSON

Seriously, Walters, you've got to find me another computer.

WALTERS

(SERIOUSLY) I know and I sympathize with you, Lieutenant. I promise you when we get our replacements I'll train a new computer for you.

JACKSON

Man, it's a deal. Oh, Barker's a nice enough kid; but it's just that half the time he doesn't know what he's doing. Well, just yesterday...I had him computing those final protective barrages you sent down and right in the middle of it he misread his map coordinates by a thousand yards. Imagine that if you can...a whole thousand yards short of the target. If I hadn't caught him in time he'd have fired right on our own front. Let me tell you, for a few minutes there, I was sweating blood.

MORGAN

That's our Barker!

WALTERS SHAKES HIS HEAD.

WALTERS

Humph! Well...we'll have to get him out of there the first chance we get; but right now there isn't anyone around to train to take his place. We're short-handed as it is. All we can do is wait for replacements and hope we get at least one with something resembling a brain.

JACKSON

We'd better.

FERRIN ANGRILY SHAKES THE RADIO HE IS WORKING ON AND SLAMS IT DOWN ON THE TABLE.

FERRIN

Damn bawled-up mess!

WALTERS LOOKS AT FERRIN AND SHAKES HIS HEAD AND THEN SPEAKS TO HIM AS THOUGH HE WERE A CHILD WITH A BROKEN TOY.

WALTERS

What's the matter, baby-san.

FERRIN

(ANGRILY) Nothing! Nothing, that is, that a little new equipment wouldn't solve!

WALTERS LOOKS AT MORGAN AND JACKSON AND SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS. JACKSON TAKES A CIGARETTE PACK OUT OF HIS POCKET, DISCOVERS THAT IT IS EMPTY AND THROWS IT ON THE FLOOR.

JACKSON

Who's got a cigarette? I'm out.

WALTERS

So am I.

MORGAN TAKES A PACK OF CIGARETTES FROM THE TABLE, CROSSES TO JACKSON AND OFFERS HIM ONE.

MORGAN

Here.

JACKSON TAKES A CIGARETTE AND GETS A BOOK OF MATCHES FROM HIS POCKET.

JACKSON

Thanks.

MORGAN HOLDS THE PACK OUT TO WALTERS.

I-17

MORGAN

Want one, Walters?

WALTERS

Naw. I don't want to smoke up your cigarettes. You're damn near out.

MORGAN

Go ahead. We'll get our ration at lunch.

WALTERS TAKES A CIGARETTE. MORGAN TAKES ONE AND OFFERS THE PACK TO FERRIN. JACKSON LIGHTS HIS CIGARETTE AND WALTERS'.

MORGAN

Hey, Ferrin. Want a weed?

FERRIN

(STILL ANGRY) No. I can wait until lunch.

MORGAN SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS. JACKSON OFFERS MORGAN A LIGHT.

JACKSON

Anyone superstitious?

MORGAN

No, why?

JACKSON

Three on a match.

MORGAN

Let's not press our luck.

MORGAN BLOWS OUT JACKSON'S MATCH AND LIGHTS HIS OWN CIGARETTE. JACKSON KICKS A WOODEN BOX INTO PLACE BY THE STOVE AND SITS DOWN.

JACKSON

What did Little Napoleon want?

I-18

WALTERS

You mean Colonel Bryan?

JACKSON

Who else?

WALTERS

I don't know. Said he wanted to see the Captain and that he'd be back in a little while.

JACKSON

Oh!

WALTERS

Why?

JACKSON

Just wondering.

WALTERS

Well, you can search me. We're the last ones to ever find out what's going on.

JACKSON

I was just wondering what would pull him away from his warm stove on a wet day like today.

FERRIN BECOMES INTERESTED AND FORGETS HIS WORK.

FERRIN

You can lay odds it's something juicy.

JACKSON

I bet I could make a damn good guess. They've been saying down at regiment that he wants to pull another of his little raids before the rains really get started.

MORGAN

No, he wouldn't be that stupid.

SUDDENLY BECOMING MORE CONCERNED.

Would he?

JACKSON

Why else would he be crawling around the wet countryside looking for Captain Fabian?

WALTERS

He could have a dozen reasons.

JACKSON

But if he wants to see the Captain, why doesn't he call him back to headquarters?

WALTERS

Don't ask me.

JACKSON

I'll tell you why. He doesn't want to tip his hand and give it all away. If he starts calling company commanders back to regiment, everyone with any sense is going to know that it's something big--like another damned raid. So what does he do? He goes out to their companies to see them.

WALTERS

Hell, he probably only wants to borrow a cup of sugar from our mess-hall.

JACKSON

Aren't you the optimistic one! Well...if you won't buy that story, try this one. Suppose there is a raid. We'd have to know about it before most of the other companies so we could have time to plot concentrations and barrages....And so... Bryan comes looking for the Captain. Am I getting through to you?

WALTERS

Got you.

FERRIN

And it makes sense.

MORGAN

But...after this rain no one will be able to move out in the valley. It'll be so muddy that....

FERRIN INTERRUPTS MORGAN IMPATIENTLY.

FERRIN

Do you think that would stop Napoleon. That bastard ain't got brain one! A little rain never stopped him before.

JACKSON

What else could it be?

FERRIN

Wouldn't that frost you though?

WALTERS

(PHILOSOPHICALLY) Well, It's to be expected. Bryan has been quiet for almost three weeks now. I guess it's time for another of his stupid raids.

JACKSON

And it'll be my platoon that moves to the forward run-up position to support the damn fiasco. It's our turn.

MORGAN

But he...he couldn't!...Ah, nuts!

JACKSON GRINS IN SPITE OF HIMSELF.

JACKSON

What's the matter, Morgan?

MORGAN

Oh...nothing. But you'd think after what happened to Lieutenant Milton and a few others that Colonel Bryan would learn a thing or two.

FERRIN

Ahhh! It'd take more than Milton to change Bryan's mind.

I-21

Plenty before Milton has got knocked off and not been noticed.

MORGAN

He was crazy...sending Milton and a platoon of mortars out into No Man's Land. It's a wonder they weren't all killed.

FERRIN

Little Napoleon and his goddam raids. I wish there was some other way he could impress the brass at division headquarters.

MORGAN

Lieutenant Milton was such a...such a nice guy...and a damn good officer too.

JACKSON RISES AND GRINDS OUT HIS CIGARETTE AGAINST THE STOVE.

JACKSON

Yah.

MORGAN LOOKS AT JACKSON AND THERE IS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE. THEN MORGAN SPEAKS.

MORGAN

Well...Bryan's a lunk-head, anyway.

WALTERS

With his eye on a desk at division headquarters...a fast promotion. I'd like to promote him one.

WALTERS PAUSES A MOMENT AND PUTS OUT HIS CIGARETTE.

The worst of these raids is that they all go for nothing. What in hell do they prove anyway. Nothing that we don't already know. We stick our necks out while Bryan pulls the strings and tells big stories back at division. I don't mind risking my neck if it's winning the war, but I hate risking it to fight Bryan's private war with the army.

FERRIN

So what? What can you do about it?

WALTERS

Not a goddam thing and that's the pity of it. But there are

those who can do something about it...if they would...if they had enough guts.

MORGAN

Meaning who?

WALTERS

I'm not supposed to talk about my superiors.

JACKSON

Captain Fabian.

WALTERS

You said it, I didn't. But now that you've mentioned him... yes.

MORGAN

But what could he do?

WALTERS

A helluva lot.

JACKSON

He does what he can.

WALTERS

Does he? I haven't heard of it. Why, in the name of all that's holy, doesn't he stand up to Bryan? Where's his back bone?

JACKSON

Do you really think it would do much good? He's a captain and Bryan's a colonel. There's a great deal of difference there.

WALTERS

So what? You're a lieutenant and I'm a master sergeant. There's even a greater difference there.

JACKSON

But you must know that's different.

I-23

WALTERS

Why is it so different?

JACKSON

Because we've made it so. Or at least I have. I don't belong with the officers and I know it. I belong here...or at least I feel that I do. You are my age, you talk my language, our lives have been pretty much the same....So, while no one's looking, I come here and relax. Nothing like this exists between Captain Fabian and Colonel Bryan. I hope you realize that. And even if it did, that wouldn't make them equal in the army's eyes. Remember that...and while you're at it, remember that the captain is doing all he can do under the circumstances.

THERE IS A SILENCE--AN UNCOMFORTABLE ONE. FINALLY MORGAN SPEAKS QUIETLY.

MORGAN

We know....

SUDDENLY JACKSON LAUGHS HEARTILY.

JACKSON

My God! I made a speech! See, Walters, that's what you get for lippping-off.

THEY ALL LAUGH.

WALTERS

(STILL LAUGHING) If that's a sample of your speeches, I'll keep my mouth shut next time.

THE DOOR FLAP OPENS AND CAPTAIN FABIAN ENTERS. FABIAN IS NOTICEABLY OLDER THAN THE OTHERS, BEING BETWEEN THIRTY-FIVE AND FORTY. HE IS GENERALLY CALM AND SELF-POSSESSED. THE MEN STOP LAUGHING AS FABIAN ENTERS. FABIAN IS SURPRISED AT SEEING JACKSON.

JACKSON

Hi, Captain.

FABIAN

Jackson. I thought I left you at your platoon. What are you

doing down here?

JACKSON

Everything was under control at the platoon and it looked like a very dull day. So I came down here to have lunch with you.

FABIAN

Good. How long have you been here?

JACKSON

Oh, not long. I left the platoon just after you did.

WALTERS

By the way, Captain, Colonel Bryan was here looking for you.

FABIAN

He was? Did he say what he wanted?

WALTERS

No, only that he'd be back in a little while.

JACKSON

What do you suppose he wants?

FABIAN

Nothing probably. Maybe he wants to chew me out for not getting the ammo reports in on time. Have you eaten?

WALTERS

Not yet, sir.

FABIAN

They were starting to serve when I passed the kitchen. You'd better go get your chow.

WALTERS

(TO MORGAN AND FERRIN) Come on, let's eat.

FERRIN, MORGAN AND WALTERS GO TO THEIR BUNKS TO GET THEIR MESS-KITS AND COATS.

I-25

FABIAN

You won't need your coats. The rain has stopped...for a while at least.

FERRIN

Hallelujah!

WALTERS, FERRIN AND MORGAN START TOWARD THE DOOR WITH THE MESS GEAR. WALTERS STOPS.

WALTERS

Oh! Whose turn is it to stay in charge?

MORGAN STOPS SUDDENLY.

MORGAN

Mine. You guys go ahead.

JACKSON

All three of you go. I'll watch the phones.

MORGAN

Thanks, Lieutenant. Sure you don't mind?

JACKSON

Nah! But you've got to bring back my lunch.

MORGAN

I thought there was a catch in it. But it's a deal anyway.

FERRIN

(UNPLEASANTLY) Maybe we can eat in peace today. The Chinks may take a break.

THEY START OUT THE DOOR.

WALTERS

Oh, I sort of like an explosion or two with my meals. It aids digestion.

MORGAN, FERRIN AND WALTERS EXIT. JACKSON GOES TO THE DOOR AND CALLS AFTER THEM.

JACKSON

And don't forget my cigarette ration!

JACKSON COMES BACK TO FABIAN.

Got time for a cup of coffee?

FABIAN

Sure.

JACKSON PICKS UP THE CUP HE HAS BEEN USING AND LOOKS AROUND FOR ANOTHER ONE.

JACKSON

Guess they took their cups with them.

POURS COFFEE.

You can use this one if you don't mind drinking after me.

FABIAN TAKES THE CUP.

FABIAN

That's all right. Thanks.

FABIAN DRINKS.

How's Ruth?

JACKSON

Fine. Fine.

JACKSON LAUGHS.

She's driving Mom crazy thinking she's having labor pains. She says we've got ourselves a track star. He's been kicking the hell out of her all last week.

FABIAN

Well, it won't be much longer. Who knows, maybe you're a papa already and don't know it.

I-27

JACKSON

I hope so. This waiting is getting me down. I'd give my right arm to be there...my left one, too, or anything else for that matter.

FABIAN

I bet you would at that. It's quite an experience sweating out your first one. Fortunately, the second baby's a little easier on the father.

THERE IS A PAUSE WHILE FABIAN DRINKS HIS COFFEE
AND JACKSON SITS LOST IN THOUGHT.

FABIAN

Have you written to Milt's wife yet?

JACKSON

Huh? Oh, no, not yet.

FABIAN

Well...she's probably heard from Washington by this time anyway.

JACKSON

Yes, but that doesn't excuse me. I asked for the job...and I still ought to write to her.

JACKSON GETS UP RESTLESSLY.

God knows, I've tried. I've tried and tried but never with any luck. I must have written a dozen letters to her and then torn everyone of them up. But what can you say? How can you say it? He's dead and I can't say it. I've tried everyway I know how. But it all sounds so cold. It...it's just no good. I haven't even written and told Ruth. I didn't want to upset her...not with the baby and all. She and Marge were good friends. So here I sit.

FABIAN

Well, I don't envy you and that's the truth. It's not an easy thing to do. I was more than happy to let you have the job of writing when you asked for it....But...would you like me to write to her?

JACKSON

No...no...I'll do it eventually. Milt was my friend and Marge will expect to hear from me. Still, I don't know where to start. I can't simply say he's dead. I can't write that. And everytime I try I find myself putting down things that don't belong in a letter. Everytime I want to tell her the truth. And yet I can't say that Milt is dead because some son-of-a-bitch wanted to impress the brass back at headquarters. What good would it do? What good would it do her to know.... Ahhh, God!

FABIAN

I wouldn't write that. It's not necessarily true.

JACKSON

It's my opinion and I can't change it. I've been given no reason to change it.

FABIAN

You still hold Bryan responsible for it all, don't you?

JACKSON

Who else? Who's responsible if he isn't?

FABIAN

Does someone have to be responsible for Milt's death?

JACKSON

What do you call it? Sending Milton out into No Man's Land with a platoon of mortars right under the noses of the Chinks. Any fool would have known better. It was suicide and Milton said so at the time.

FABIAN

But does that make Bryan responsible?

JACKSON

You have to admit that going out there was unnecessary. Bryan wanted to make a big splash for the top brass. What other motive could he have?

FABIAN

He no doubt thought it was the right thing to do at the time. Bryan's a busy man with a big job to do...and just like the rest of us he makes mistakes.

JACKSON

But he doesn't profit by his mistakes.

FABIAN

That remains to be seen. Don't get me wrong, Cal, I liked Milton a great deal and I was sorry to lose him...as sorry as anyone. But I just don't think you can hold any man responsible for it.

JACKSON

Generally speaking, no. But when you get down to particular cases it's a different matter altogether. This case especially. Hell, Fabian, we all know that Bryan's out for a desk at division and another chunk of brass for his cap.

FABIAN

But, Cal, we can't judge a man like Bryan. It's foolish to try. He's not like us. He's an old army horse and he sees things differently than we do. He has a job, he knows what it is and he does it, come hell or high water. Don't try to judge him by our standards.

JACKSON

But it's not only me. Look around you. They all see through him...Walters, Morgan, Ferrin. It's obvious enough to them and they don't have the opportunity to really see him in action as we do. To them he's a guy from regimental headquarter but they can still see through him.

FABIAN

Of course they dislike Bryan. He's nothing more than a symbol of authority to them. When he sends down an order it generally is something important. They have to jump and they don't like to jump. They know nothing of him and what he does or why he does it, other than that he sends out orders that usually mean a little discomfort for them and a stiff reminder that they're in the army. Naturally, they don't like him and their picture of him is apt to be warped by that dislike. They

probably dislike me at times for the same reason.

JACKSON

That can work the other way around too. If they are so far removed from him that he is nothing more than a symbol of authority, isn't it also possible that he is so far removed from them that they have become nothing but symbols to him?

FABIAN

You can't ask him to know every man in the regiment and his problems. There isn't time for that.

JACKSON

I'm not asking that. But I don't think he should consider them as merely symbols at the risk of forgetting that they're human beings...because they're not human beings to him. They're little...pegs...that he moves here and there like chessmen in a game of chess. He plays with them as he sees fit.

FABIAN

What are you saying?

JACKSON

Simply that they have no more reality for him than chessmen on a chessboard.

FABIAN

I think you're making a mistake, Cal. You'd better think it over.

JACKSON

I have thought it over. For three weeks I've been thinking it over.

FABIAN

Maybe that's your trouble...you've been thinking too much. Why don't you forget about it. Let me write to Milt's wife.

JACKSON

Do you think that would make me change my opinion of Bryan?

I-31

FABIAN

Maybe. At least you'd see things a little more clearly.

JACKSON

I'm afraid I see them all too clearly. Fabian, something's got to be done. Somebody's got to stand....

THE DOOR FLAP MOVES. FABIAN SEES IT AND RAISES HIS HAND TO STOP JACKSON FROM SAYING ANYTHING MORE. THE FLAP IS MOVED ASIDE AND COLONEL BRYAN ENTERS.

BRYAN

Fabian. So you're back.

FABIAN CROSSES TOWARD BRYAN AND GIVES HIM AN EASY SALUTE.

FABIAN

Good morning, Colonel.

BRYAN

I was here a little while ago but you were out at the platoons.

FABIAN

So my sergeant told me. I'm sorry I missed you.

BRYAN

It's all right. All right. I should have called ahead and told you I was coming.

BRYAN SEES JACKSON AND DISMISSES HIM WITH A CURT GREETING.

Jackson.

JACKSON NODS AND SPEAKS WITHOUT A TRACE OF WARMTH IN HIS VOICE.

JACKSON

Hello, Colonel.

FABIAN LOOKS AT JACKSON AND SPEAKS QUICKLY TO COVER JACKSON'S COLDNESS.

I-32

FABIAN

(TO BRYAN) Could I get you a cup of coffee to warm you up?

BRYAN

No, thanks. Just had lunch at Fox Company.

JACKSON MOVES TOWARD THE DOOR.

JACKSON

Well, if you'll excuse me, I'll go get my lunch before it's all gone.

FABIAN

Sure. Go ahead.

JACKSON

I'll see you later, sir.

JACKSON EXITS. COLONEL BRYAN WATCHES HIM GO.
AFTER HE IS GONE AND THE FLAP IS CLOSED BEHIND HIM,
BRYAN SPEAKS, SHAKING HIS HEAD IN MILD DISGUST.

BRYAN

Humph! That's a good one.

FABIAN

Jackson?

BRYAN

They send these R.O.T.C. boys over here and they don't know which end is up.

FABIAN

I always thought Jackson was a pretty efficient officer.

BRYAN

Yes, but he let's his men run all over him.

FABIAN

He always gets his job done.

I-33

BRYAN

But he forgets he's an officer. Lets down on discipline. I have spoken to you about that before. He gets too friendly with his men and that's not good.

FABIAN

That's just his way of getting things done. We have our way and he has his. It's just a case of a different psychological approach.

BRYAN

Well, maybe you're right, Fabian. I never was much for this psychology stuff.

BRYAN DISMISSES THE SUBJECT AND GOES ON TO SOMETHING ELSE.

Damnably weather we've got.

FABIAN

It is at that. The roads back here are worse than they are up at the front. They're getting pretty damn treacherous. I sent my driver back for the mail before they have a chance to get much worse. The ground's thawing quite rapidly and of course the rain hasn't helped much.

BRYAN

Yeh, I suppose the spring rains will be settling-in in a week or two and then it's going to be worse than ever.

FABIAN

We'll be fighting the mud then. I don't know which is the worst--the war or the weather.

BRYAN

Well, if we can believe the weather report, the rain is over for a couple of days or so. Good weather predicted for the rest of the week...and I can't say I'm sorry. It seems you no sooner get rid of the snow and the ice than you have the mud to contend with. I'll be damn glad when it clears up for good and we can get back to fighting a war. This shilly-shallying around is enough to get you down.

FABIAN

It gets on your nerves all right. But there's not much else you can do but wait for decent weather.

BRYAN

But, God, what a waste of valuable time. It's always been my opinion that there's such a thing as turning the weather to your advantage. It's just as hard on the Chinks as it is on us. Harder. They don't have the advantage of our equipment. They'd have a helluva time fighting back in this kind of weather.

FABIAN

I don't know. They're pretty well equipped...and what they don't have they've been trained to do without. Besides, they're dug into those hills so deep you couldn't rout them out with an atomic bomb.

BRYAN

Oh, it could be done. It could be done. One full-scale attack--if it was well-planned--would loosen them up. You know yourself it's not the Chinks that's holding us up. We've got no one to blame but ourselves. The trouble is...everyone over here is so all-fired afraid of what'll be said back home that they're scared to make a move. So we sit here and wait. You can't win a war that way, I don't care what you say.

BRYAN SETTLES DOWN ONTO A BOX, OBVIOUSLY OFF ON HIS FAVORITE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.

Hell's fires! It's just that every day we sit here like this, we're losing ground...and we're losing face too.

FABIAN LAUGHS GOOD-NATUREDLY.

FABIAN

Personally, I'd rather lose a little ground than lose my carcass trying to do the impossible.

BRYAN

What do you mean...the impossible?

FABIAN

Competing with the weather.

I-35

BRYAN

What's so impossible about that?

FABIAN

Well, maybe it's not impossible. But is it reasonable? Sure, you can turn the weather to your advantage. But you can turn time to your advantage also. It's just as reasonable--in fact, I think it's more logical--to use this time to solidify our own defenses and prepare for an all-out offensive when decent weather arrives.

BRYAN

Fabian, you're beginning to talk just like those bastards back at division headquarters.

FABIAN LAUGHS.

FABIAN

Am I?

BRYAN

Yes, you are.

FABIAN

Maybe they know what they're talking about, Colonel.

SUDDENLY BRYAN IS AROUSED. ANGER AND RESENTMENT ARE IN HIS WORDS. FABIAN IS TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND REACTS UNCOMFORTABLY.

BRYAN

The hell they do! The hell they know about anything. They have no more idea about what's going on than the man in the moon. Why, they don't know the first thing, the first thing, about fighting a war. Sometimes it's really disgusting!

FABIAN

Oh...?

BRYAN

I've just spent two days back at division haggling with the General.

FABIAN UNDERSTANDS THE IMPLICATION OF BRYAN'S VISIT
TO DIVISION.

FABIAN

I see.

BRYAN

It's like pulling teeth to get anything out of General Langley. And then General Dilworth had to stick in his two cents worth. I wish he'd learn to keep his mouth shut until he knows what in hell he's talking about.

FABIAN

So? What happened?

BRYAN

I just had to out-talk him, that's all. You know that's the only way to get a damn thing out of them...Wrangling with them until they get so tired of listening to you that they give up and listen to reason. Oh, Langley's really not so bad, but that damn Dilworth! The way he harps on the cost of this and the cost of that, you'd swear to high heaven that every cent came out of his own pocket.

FABIAN

Well, that's part of his job. You've got to admit he's a pretty shrewd operator.

BRYAN

Shrewd, hell! I'll admit nothing of the kind. He tries to run a war like it was big business. So much for overhead, so much for operational expenses, so much for this, so much for that. If he's so all-fired shrewd, why can't he see what a waste of time all this sitting-around is? What have we done in the last two-three months any way besides send out a few piddling patrols now and then? I'll tell you've what we've done...nothing! Nothing except the few times that I've been able to convince division that the only way to accomplish anything is to throw a raid against the enemy's front. If you're going to expend the ammunition and equipment, why not put it to some purpose? What in the name of Almighty God do these piddling patrols prove anyway? Once in a while they listen to me, but most of the time Dilworth sits back there and frets about the cost of things.

FABIAN

Where Dilworth is concerned, cost doesn't necessarily wear a price tag.

BRYAN

What's that?

FABIAN

He's also figuring up the cost of time and men and vital materials...cost weighed against accomplishment.

BRYAN GROWS IMPATIENT WITH FABIAN.

BRYAN

Ahhh! Any real accomplishment is going to cost you something. And that's what Dilworth fails to see. Everytime I go back to division, he's right there to argue with me every step of the way. But, by God, I usually get what I go after. It took me two days to convince Langley, but I convinced him in spite of Dilworth. I told him point-blank that these patrols are a waste of time and effort. The only way to get anything is to go after it. You can't find out anything by sending patrols out into the valley just to poke around for a few hours and then come back. We've got to meet the enemy face to face and take a damn good look at him. Then we'll know what we want to know...something worth knowing. And it took me two days to convince them of that. Thank God, I had Langley on my side or I'd still be haggling.

BRYAN CALMS DOWN.

I have to hand it to Langley. He's as disgusted with the results of these patrols as I am. Of course he doesn't always agree about the raids, but I can generally make him see the light. He usually comes around in the end.

FABIAN

Then division has okayed another raid?

BRYAN SMILES WITH A NOTE OF TRIUMPH.

BRYAN

Yes, the basic plan. They left the particulars up to me.

FABIAN

I see. When's it supposed to come off?

BRYAN

Well, in view of the weather report...the day after tomorrow. I thought I'd better give you a little forewarning so's you'd have time to pull a recon before I break the news at the briefing tonight.

FABIAN

Thanks. I can use all the time I can get.

BRYAN

I thought you could.

BRYAN IS EXPANSIVE AND SELF-SATISFIED.

Fabian, we're going to do things right. There won't be any playing around out in the valley this time. A moment ago you were talking about accomplishment. Well, this is it. This time we're going out there and accomplish something.

FABIAN

I hope so. What is it you want me to do?

BRYAN

Where's your situation map?

FABIAN

There.

FABIAN INDICATES THE LARGE SITUATION MAP WHICH IS ON THE WALL. BRYAN CROSSES TO THE MAP.

BRYAN

Come here.

FABIAN CROSSES TO THE MAP.

BRYAN

One thing, we're going to destroy that village in the valley

I-39

that's been giving us all the trouble. What's the name of it? The one the Chinks have been hiding out in?

FABIAN

Kemwa?

BRYAN

That's it. That's the one.

FABIAN

We haven't found a Chink there in months.

BRYAN

Here it is.

BRYAN FINDS IT ON THE MAP.

But we've found plenty of evidence that they've been there.

FABIAN

Sure, they prowl through it at night just as we prowl through it during the day.

BRYAN IGNORES THE LAST COMMENT.

BRYAN

I'm sending a platoon out to burn it. The Chinks will have to look for a new place to hide at night. And when that's accomplished, then the tanks will move to the north end of the valley and deliver direct fire against the enemy's front.

BRYAN FOLLOWS THE PLAN AND THE MAP AS FABIAN LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER.

FABIAN

You're going to get into trouble out there.

BRYAN

I expect to. We'll bring those Chinks out of their holes or know the reason why.

FABIAN

I wasn't thinking about the Chinks. That valley is a mess.

After all this rain the rice paddies at the far end of the valley will be just like a swamp. Put a tank out there and it'll sink out of sight.

BRYAN

Ahhh! The ground's not that bad. If we get into any difficulty the rifle companies will be right behind the tanks. Besides, the weather report said there'll be no more rain between now and then. That'll give the ground time to dry out a bit.

FABIAN

Or thaw--if the sun comes out.

BRYAN IGNORES FABIAN AND GOES ON.

BRYAN

Of course, if it rains, we'll have to postpone things for a while.

FABIAN IS STILL SKEPTICAL.

FABIAN

Hmmmmmm! Well...what will I be doing while all of this is going on? I suppose you'll want all three platoons in their forward run-up positions.

BRYAN TURNS TO FABIAN, AN EDGE OF SOLICITUDE IN HIS VOICE, AND ATTEMPTS TO WARM HIM TO THE PLAN.

BRYAN

What do you suggest?

FABIAN

Well, let me see.

FABIAN STUDIES THE MAP CLOSELY FOR A MOMENT.

Considering the way our front slopes from right to left, I'd say it would be wisest to leave the platoon on the right flank in its regular position. It can still cover the sector from there and, just in case anything should go wrong, it will be all set to deliver retreat fire.

BRYAN IS PLEASED AND INTERESTED.

I-41

BRYAN

Good! Good!

FABIAN

The center platoon and the one on the left flank will have to use their run-ups.

BRYAN

That's just how I see it. However...the platoon on the left flank....

FABIAN

That's Jackson's platoon. What about it?

BRYAN

I want it moved up!

FABIAN

Moved up?

BRYAN

We're going to need a helluva lot of fire at the far end of the valley when those tanks and riflemen get out there...all we can get. Jackson's mortars can't reach that far, so we'll just have to move them up to where they can reach it.

FABIAN

You mean you want to move Jackson's mortars out into the valley?

BRYAN

You've done it before.

FABIAN

I know I've done it before, but never with much luck! Where in heaven's name would you put a platoon of mortars out there?

BRYAN

The only place you can put them.

FINDS THE SPOT ON THE MAP.

Right here. Behind Hill 197.

FABIAN

197!...It'll never work. We've tried that spot before. It's nothing but a damn rice paddy...and the valley there is so narrow you can hardly turn around in it.

BRYAN UNSUCCESSFULLY TRIES TO CONCEAL HIS IRRITATION.

BRYAN

Well, where else would you suggest we put them?

FABIAN THINKS FOR A MOMENT.

FABIAN

I think we'd be wiser to use our regular run-up positions.

BRYAN

Not this time. We've got to get that protective fire farther out into the valley or it won't be a damn bit of good to us.

FABIAN

We've always been able to cover the whole sector before from the run-ups.

BRYAN

But I want to move part of the mortar support right out of the valley...move it right up the mountain to where the Chinks are dug in. When the tanks get out to the other end of the valley they're going to need that fire.

FABIAN

Of course they'll need the fire, I'm not denying that. But why move Jackson's platoon out into No Man's Land? Why in the hell can't artillery deliver fire on the mountains? They've always done it before.

BRYAN

They'll be there. I've got plans for artillery too. But you

know as well as I do that artillery can't get on the reverse slopes of those mountains and your mortars can! And we'll need all the fire we can get on those reverse slopes. Hell's fires, man! That's where the Chinks are dug in and that's where we need your mortars.

FABIAN STILL TRIES TO REASON WITH BRYAN.

FABIAN

All right! All right! Suppose we put Jackson way out there and push our fire over the mountain, who's going to provide the close support to our own troops?

BRYAN

I'll worry about that. We'll still have your other two platoons. Besides, if you do an effective job with Jackson's platoon, we won't need a great deal of close support.

FABIAN

But, Bryan...Bryan...we can't do it.

BRYAN

Why not, for God's sake. What's to hold us back?

FABIAN

Have you been out to 197?

BRYAN'S IMPATIENCE BEGINS TO SHOW.

BRYAN

Fabian, we were both out there on recon.

FABIAN

But when? Six weeks ago! Before we moved onto the line. But I was out there myself last week. It's nothing but a damn creek bed and muddy rice paddies. And with the warmer weather and the little rain we've had, it's going to be worse than ever! Good Lord! We'd fire one round and sink out of sight--mortar and all! And how in the name of heaven do you think we'll get our trucks out there and back?

BRYAN BRISTLES STUBBORNLY.

I-44

BRYAN

If Captain Wheeler can get his tanks all the way out to the other end of the valley and back again, you shouldn't have any trouble with your goddamn trucks!

FABIAN STILL SPEAKS QUIETLY.

FABIAN

I don't give a damn what Wheeler's going to do. It's my company I'm worrying about, not his. Bryan, if I move my men in behind 197, they'll be just so many sitting ducks!

BRYAN MAKES A GESTURE WITH HIS HAND DISMISSING IT ALL AS NONSENSE.

BRYAN

Ahhhh!

FABIAN GOES ON.

FABIAN

Dammit! I tell you, I know! I sent a section from a platoon out there once before. Remember? That was the day Milton got it.

BRYAN'S ANGER GROWS.

BRYAN

Lieutenant Milton was a stupid ass! He had no business being on the sky-line.

FABIAN

Sky-line hell!! He was right down in the valley with the rest of his men.

FABIAN MAKES A STRONG EFFORT TO BE CALM AND REASONABLE. HE CROSSES BACK TO THE MAP AND POINTS OUT WHAT IT IS HE WISHES BRYAN TO SEE.

Look here! Here's 197, and here are my men. And here...not more than one thousand yards away, is Hill 403 swarming with Chinks. They'll be looking right down our throats. My God, man, it would be suicide to send a platoon out there!

BRYAN IS UNRELENTING.

BRYAN

Not if you move into position after dark and stay close enough to the hill and dig in.

FABIAN

They'll see the muzzle blast and the smoke from the mortars. Good Lord, they can't help but know we're there. They'll throw the kitchen sink at us.

BRYAN

Ahhh! Their artillery couldn't touch you.

FABIAN

I'm not worried about their artillery. That'll bounce behind us. It's their mortars that's got me worried. If we can reach them, it's a cinch they can reach us.

BRYAN

Well, what in hell do you want? A sure thing? You can't always play it safe. Don't forget, they'll be shooting at the boys in the valley, too. And they'll have a damnsite less cover than you'll have!

FABIAN

That's true enough, but the men in the valley will be on the move and my men will be forced to sit in one spot. And the rifleman isn't saddled with three-hundred pounds of excess equipment. He can get up and move when he wants to.

FABIAN PAUSES FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SPEAKS QUIETLY AND CONTROLLED.

Have you thought of what might happen if the rifle companies aren't so successful? Suppose our left flank weakens. What's to prevent the Chinks from swooping down off of 403 and moving in on Jackson's flank? And if they did...well, the valley behind 197 is so damn narrow he wouldn't stand a chance. His platoon would be trapped! Good God! The Chinks could wipe out Jackson and his men with one blow. Bryan, we can't send Jackson into a trap like that. We can't do it!

BRYAN'S ANGER IS THOROUGHLY AROUSED.

I-46

BRYAN

Captain Fabian! You'll do as I say! Don't tell me what we can do and what we can't do! I ought to remind you of a thing or two. I could ship you down the line so fast you wouldn't know what hit you, Captain. You and your goddam men! You're getting as bad as Jackson. It's time you stopped mothering them. These aren't school-boys, Captain; they're men! Damnit!

FABIAN

Men.

BRYAN PICKS UP HIS HELMET AND PREPARES TO LEAVE.

BRYAN

Go make your recon, Captain. And be at headquarters this evening for the briefing.

FABIAN STANDS IN CONFUSION FOR A MOMENT. SLOWLY HE REALIZES THE FUTILITY OF FURTHER ARGUMENT. ONCE HE BEGINS TO SAY SOMETHING AND BRYAN SQUARES HIS SHOULDERS AS A WARNING TO SAY NO MORE. AFTER A MOMENT FABIAN SPEAKS QUIETLY.

FABIAN

Yes, sir.

FABIAN STANDS AT ATTENTION AND SALUTES BRYAN--A QUICK, CRISP SALUTE. BRYAN QUICKLY TURNS AND CONFIDENTLY STORMS OUT THE DOOR. FABIAN WATCHES HIM GO, WALKS TO THE DOOR, AND SLOWLY TURNS BACK INTO THE HOOTCHIE.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

Scene I

THE SCENE IS THE SAME AS IN ACT ONE. MESS GEARS AND JACKETS HAVE BEEN PLACED BY THE BUNKS OF THEIR OWNERS AND THE RADIO THAT FERRIN HAS BEEN REPAIRING HAS BEEN PUSHED TO ONE END OF THE TABLE. MORGAN'S LAUNDRY IS HANGING FROM AN IMPROVISED CLOTHES LINE BY THE STOVE.

AS THE CURTAIN RISES, MORGAN, JACKSON, AND WALTERS ARE SEATED AROUND ONE END OF THE TABLE PLAYING PINOCHLE TO WHILE AWAY THE TIME. WALTERS HAS JUST WON A PLAY AND IS GATHERING IN THE CARDS.

WALTERS

Don't tell me I got a trick.

JACKSON LAYS THE REMAINDER OF HIS HAND DOWN ON THE TABLE FACE UP.

JACKSON

Yah...and I think the rest of them are mine. Any arguments?

THE OTHERS AGREE BY THROWING IN THEIR HANDS. MORGAN TAKES THE CARDS AND BEGINS TO SHUFFLE AND DEAL THEM.

JACKSON

Where did Ferrin go?

WALTERS

He's probably over to the Captain's hootchie polishing the Old Man's boots. Got to get in his brownie points.

JACKSON

Nah...he's not the type.

WALTERS

That's what you think.

II-1-2

MORGAN DEALS THE CARDS.

MORGAN

Oh...I don't think so. He just has to be doing something, that's all.

JACKSON AND WALTERS GATHER THEIR CARDS AS THEY ARE DEALT AND ARRANGE THEIR HANDS.

JACKSON

What's gotten into him lately anyway? You can't even kid with him without him blowing his stack.

WALTERS

You ought to try living with him. He ought to be equipped with the safety valve. Whatever you do, don't mention replacements again. That's his sore spot. I couldn't put up with another fit of hysterics.

MORGAN

Maybe he's got troubles.

WALTERS

Who hasn't?

JACKSON

You don't suppose his wife's out chasing around with some guys back home, do you?

WALTERS

I don't know who would want her.

JACKSON

Well, I took care of mine. No man wants to chase around with a pregnant woman.

WALTERS

Oh, you never can tell. It's safer that way.

MORGAN PICKS UP HIS OWN HAND.

II-1-3

MORGAN

Has your wife had the baby yet, Lieutenant?

JACKSON

Not yet...at least I don't think so.

WALTERS BEGINS THE BIDDING.

WALTERS

Open. Hell, she'll probably have five or six by the time you get home.

JACKSON

If she does, they'd better all look like me. Sixteen.

MORGAN

Seventeen.

WALTERS

They make good tax exemptions, anyway. Eighteen.

FERRIN ENTERS FROM OUTSIDE WITH A ROLL OF TISSUE
PAPER WHICH HE HANGS IN ITS CUSTOMARY SPOT ON A NAIL
BY THE DOOR.

MORGAN

Pass.

MORGAN SEES FERRIN.

Where you been?

JACKSON

I'll say nineteen.

FERRIN

Out. Why?

MORGAN

Nothing. Just thought I'd ask.

II-1-4

WALTERS

Twenty.

FERRIN

So what do you want? A progress report?

MORGAN, WALTERS AND JACKSON LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND SHRUG THEIR SHOULDERS. FERRIN WALKS TO THE STOVE TO WARM HIMSELF AND THE OTHERS GO BACK TO THEIR GAME. JACKSON ADDRESSES WALTERS.

JACKSON

You can have it.

WALTERS TAKES THE WIDOW CARDS AND TURNS THEM FACE UP ON THE TABLE. THE THREE PLAYERS STUDY THEM. JACKSON GROANS IN MOCK PAIN.

JACKSON

Ohhhh! Ohhhh! Would that have set me up. Two aces!

WALTERS

Tsk! Tsk! Tsk! That's the breaks. Well...there's no sense in playing this hand. I can meld enough to go out.

WALTERS PLACES HIS HAND ON THE TABLE FOR THE OTHERS TO SEE AND THEY THROW THEIR CARDS INTO THE CENTER OF THE TABLE.

WALTERS

Want to join us, Ferrin. We'll play a game of race-horse.

FERRIN

Nah...I don't think so. You guys go ahead.

JACKSON RISES FROM THE TABLE AND STRETCHES.

JACKSON

Let's quit. I've had enough pinochle for one day.

MORGAN

Me too.

II-1-5

WALTERS

What's the matter with you guys? Can't you take it? I hate to trounce you this way.

MORGAN

Yah. Yah. We know.

MORGAN STRETCHES AND YAWNS. THERE IS SILENCE FOR A MOMENT. EACH MAN IS OCCUPIED WITH HIS OWN THOUGHTS. FERRIN CROSSES TO HIS BUNK, PICKS UP HIS CARBINE AND BEGINS TO CLEAN IT. WALTERS RISES FROM THE TABLE, CROSSES TO HIS BUNK AND STRETCHES OUT. JACKSON CROSSES TO THE STOVE AND LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. MORGAN SLOWLY GATHERS UP THE CARDS AND PUTS THEM AWAY. HE THEN PUTS HIS ELBOWS ON THE TABLE AND PROPS HIS CHIN IN HIS HANDS. HE STARTS TO SING SOFTLY TO HIMSELF AND PRESENTLY THE WORDS FADE AWAY TO A SOFT HUM THAT FINALLY ENTIRELY DWINDLES INTO SILENCE. HE SITS IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT, STIRS AND THEN SPEAKS. HIS WORDS HAVE THE RING OF AN ILL-CONCEALED HINT.

MORGAN

Walters? You know what I would like?

WALTERS

Yah. But there isn't a woman within miles.

MORGAN

That's not what I mean. I was...ah...really thinking of... ah...of a wee shot of Scotch.

WALTERS

Oh! That was hardly subtle at all.

MORGAN LOOKS AT JACKSON, WINKS, AND COAXES HIM FOR ASSISTANCE.

MORGAN

Lieutenant, how would you like a Scotch high-ball?

JACKSON

How would you like your discharge papers?

II-1-6

MORGAN

Seriously, if there was a bottle of Scotch handy, wouldn't you like a high-ball?

JACKSON

I wouldn't refuse one.

WALTERS

You're damn free with my Scotch, Morgan.

JACKSON PICKS UP THE REMARK IMMEDIATELY AND TURNS TO WALTERS.

JACKSON

You've got a bottle of Scotch?

WALTERS

I have, but I've got a feeling I'm not going to have it for long.

JACKSON

And you haven't offered your old friend a drink?

WALTERS GRINS GOOD-NATUREDLY.

WALTERS

I don't remember making any offer.

MORGAN MAKES A GREAT SHOW OF BEING OFFENDED.

MORGAN

Well, if that's the way you feel about it, forget it. Forget it! If it makes no difference to you that your buddies go thirsty...if you can stand to see us writhing on the floor dying of thirst...forget it. I'm sorry I mentioned it. I only thought....

SLOWLY WALTERS RISES FROM HIS BUNK

WALTERS

All right. All right. Come off it, Tyrone.

II-1-7

HE KNEELS BY HIS BUNK AND SEARCHES UNDER IT FOR HIS BOTTLE OF SCOTCH.

You'll have to drink it straight or with water unless you can talk Ferrin out of one of his cokes.

JACKSON

How about it, Ferrin?

FERRIN

Sure. As long as I get a shot of Scotch. I put the cokes over in the corner to keep 'em cool.

MORGAN STARTS TOWARDS A CORNER OF THE HOOTCHIE BUT FERRIN STOPS HIM.

MORGAN

Where?

FERRIN

I'll get 'em. I know where they are.

FERRIN CROSSES TO A CORNER OF THE HOOTCHIE FOR HIS COKES AS WALTERS PRODUCES HIS BOTTLE OF SCOTCH. WALTERS HOLDS UP HIS BOTTLE WITH AN AIR OF PRIDE FOR THE OTHERS TO SEE.

WALTERS

How does it look?

JACKSON

Like Marilyn Monroe in a bikini. Where in hell did you get it?

WALTERS

My old man sent it to me.

MORGAN

Walters receives more packages than the rest of the company put together...and three-fourths of it is booze.

JACKSON

You mean you got it through the mail? That's against the

law, you know, shipping liquor through the mail.

WALTERS' MOUTH DROPS OPEN IN MOCK SURPRISE.

WALTERS

You're kidding!

FERRIN RETURNS WITH THE COKES.

FERRIN

What they don't know won't hurt them.

WALTERS

Don't just stand there, Morgan. Get some cups.

TO JACKSON.

The Old Man's pretty smart. He camouflages it in a big box and then puts these big stickers on it..."May be opened for inspection." So far no one's bothered to inspect.

JACKSON

Send your old man my name and address.

MORGAN RETURNS WITH THE CUPS AND PLACES THEM ON THE TABLE.

MORGAN

Who's going to tend bar?

WALTERS

I think I'd better.

MORGAN

Coward!

WALTERS

Lieutenant, what'll you have? Coke or water?

JACKSON

I'll take mine straight, thanks. Who wants to dilute good liquor?

II-1-9

WALTERS

One straight one coming up.

WALTERS POURS A DRINK FOR JACKSON AND HANDS THE CUP
TO HIM.

Ferrin?

FERRIN

Water in mine.

WALTERS POURS FERRIN A STRAIGHT SHOT AND GIVES HIM
THE CUP.

WALTERS

You'll have to get your own water. The bar's fresh out.

FERRIN

Ahhhhh!

FERRIN CROSSES TO THE WATER CAN BY THE DOOR AND
POURS SOME WATER INTO HIS CUP.

WALTERS

Morgan.

MORGAN HOLDS HIS CUP OUT TO WALTERS EXPECTANTLY.
WALTERS POURS A SMALL DROP IN IT AND THEN POURS
SOME IN HIS OWN CUP. MORGAN INSPECTS THE CONTENTS
OF HIS CUP AND THEN AGAIN EXTENDS IT TOWARD WALTERS.

MORGAN

Ahhhh! Come on.

WALTERS SHAKES HIS HEAD NEGATIVELY.

WALTERS

That's enough for a growing boy.

MORGAN

Right now I feel ten years older than God. Come on.

II-1-10

WALTERS GRINS AND POURS MORE SCOTCH INTO MORGAN'S CUP.

WALTERS

Open a coke, Morgan.

MORGAN TAKES A BOTTLE OPENER FROM THE TABLE AND OPENS A BOTTLE OF COKE.

MORGAN

I'll split one with you.

MORGAN POURS THE COKE INTO THEIR CUPS WHILE WALTERS RAISES A HAND TO CAUTION HIM TO GO LIGHT ON THE COKE. THEY RAISE THEIR CUPS AND TOUCH THEM TOGETHER IN A SILENT TOAST AND THEN SIP THEIR DRINKS.

Thanks, Walters.

WALTERS

Don't mention it. It's nothing...nothing. Anything that's mine is yours...apparently.

JACKSON SPRAWLS OUT ON WALTERS' BUNK AND WALTERS RETURNS HIS BOTTLE TO ITS HIDING PLACE.

FERRIN

Does this hit the spot!

MORGAN

You said it. That chow's still sitting a little heavy.

MORGAN PATS HIS STOMACH.

JACKSON

Ahhhh! This takes me back to the good old days. A quiet bar ...soft music....

WALTERS

Don't kid yourself. Home was never like this.

FERRIN

You can say that again.

II-i-11

MORGAN TAKES ANOTHER DRINK AND SMACKS HIS LIPS.

MORGAN

Not bad! All we need now is a piano.

WALTERS

Oh, yes, if there's one thing we need it's a piano. I can see us carting a piano around the Korean countryside.

MORGAN

I'd be willing to, by damn. I haven't even seen a piano since I left Japan.

JACKSON

When were you ever in Japan?

MORGAN

I stopped there on my way to this hell-hole.

WALTERS

Morgan was too good to come over on the same ship with us. So the Navy gave him his own private ship.

MORGAN

I caught up with you, didn't I?

JACKSON

Of all the luck.

MORGAN

Do you remember the typhoon we had...when was it...last August? I was in Japan then. I went down to the harbor to watch the storm and got soaked to the skin. So I went into this little waterfront dive to dry out.

WALTERS

To dry out? Come on, level with us. What was her name?

MORGAN

It wasn't anything like that. Well, anyway, the place was

II-1-12

empty. There was a Japanese fishing boat out in the harbor and the waves were tossing it around like it was nothing. The fishermen were trying to bring it into shore but didn't dare because they were afraid the waves would smash their boat into the sea-wall. Everyone was out watching the boat. I watched it for a while until I got soaking wet and then I went into this bar.

JACKSON

I'll bet it was a bar.

MORGAN

I was all alone except for the barmaid....

WALTERS

Barmaid, did you say?

MORGAN

Yes, barmaid.

WALTERS

Oh! Just checking, that's all. Just checking.

MORGAN

Well...she didn't pay much attention to me....

FERRIN

I'll bet.

MORGAN

She was looking out the window most of the time watching the fishing boat. You could hear the people outside...the men shouting and the women crying, you know, that funny kind of wail they have. Well, anyway, there was a piano there...not a very good one, but a piano at least. Man, it was nice! Not a soul in there to bother me. I must have played for two or three hours. I looked out the window once just in time to see the boat hit the sea-wall and break in two. In those waves the fishermen didn't stand a chance. They brought in one of the bodies while I was playing. It made me sort of sick so I left...and I haven't seen a piano since.

II-i-13

FERRIN

You and your damn piano.

EXPLAINING TO JACKSON.

All during basic, anytime we went anywhere, Morgan would always manage to find a piano and disappear. So Walters and me would have to live it up by ourselves.

WALTERS LOOKS AT JACKSON AND WINKS.

WALTERS

Morgan's only living for the day when he can get back to his piano, Lieutenant. Most guys...now, most guys have girl friends, but not Morgan. He's going home to a piano.

JACKSON

I guess it doesn't make much difference what you're going back to...just so long as you get back. That's the main point. Hell, right now I'd settle for just a chance to get out of this hole for about five minutes.

FERRIN

Who wouldn't?

WALTERS

That's easy. Why don't you go back to Seoul on rest leave?

JACKSON

Ha! Just give me the chance!

MORGAN

You should. It's really swell.

FERRIN

Yah, in a dull sorta way.

WALTERS

Well, it's not state-side, but it sure in hell beats this.

II-i-14

JACKSON

Have you been there, too?

WALTERS

Uh-huh. Morgan and I went on "R. and R." the last time we were in reserve.

JACKSON

Hmmmmmm! You lucky dogs! It pays to be an enlisted man. Everyone gets a rest but me.

WALTERS

Ah, bleed!

MORGAN

You should see the rest hotel. Real beds!

WALTERS PLAYS IT UP TO TORTURE JACKSON.

WALTERS

And the chow! Hmmmmmm! Ham and eggs...steaks an inch thick....

JACKSON

Cut it out! Cut it out!

WALTERS

Ahhh! That hotel. I tell you, Lieutenant, it's out of this world.

FERRIN

Oh, it might have been something once but it's just like a damn barracks now.

WALTERS

Barracks, hell!

MORGAN

When did you ever see a barracks with a patio? And grass!... green grass! I spent a whole afternoon just lying on the

II-i-15

lawn smelling the grass. Hmmm!...you'd almost think....

JACKSON LAUGHS AT MORGAN.

JACKSON

To hell with the grass. I'm more interested in the finer things in life. What about the women?

WALTERS

It wasn't that kind of a hotel.

JACKSON

What? No hot and cold running chambermaids? Weren't there any women at all?

WALTERS

Not in the hotel.

FERRIN

But Seoul's loaded with them. Pom-pom girls all over the place.

JACKSON

I don't mean the gooks. Weren't there any others?

FERRIN

Only army nurses and you know what they're like.

JACKSON

Well, they'd do in a pinch.

WALTERS

Hell...you wouldn't stand a chance, Lieutenant. They won't look at anything less than a major.

JACKSON

How do you know?

MORGAN

He tried.

II-i-16

FERRIN

Did you guys see that screwy pagoda behind the hotel? The damndest thing I ever saw.

MORGAN

You mean the shrine?

FERRIN

Shrine. Temple. I don't know what the hell it was. All done up in green and red, yellow and blue. Just squatting there behind the hotel.

MORGAN

That was their temple.

FERRIN

I don't care what it was. It looked more like a fancy out-house to me. Too bad a bomb didn't get it.

MORGAN

If you go there, Lieutenant, be sure to see the temple. It's really beautiful. So cool and so quiet. Everything echoes in it.

WALTERS

Yah...kind of creepy.

MORGAN

I'll bet it's been there forever. It was so silent! You didn't dare talk in it. There's a big carved dragon in it.

TO WALTERS

Remember?

BACK TO JACKSON

All green and red...just lying there in the middle of the floor like it was guarding the place.

WALTERS

That dragon. When you first see it, it scares the hell out

II-i-17

of you...it's so dark in there.

MORGAN

And carved monkeys all over the place. Sitting there frozen ...staring at you...watching every move you make. And it's all so still. You'd like to shout or yell or do something, but you don't dare.

FERRIN

Ah, hell, it stinks of dead fish!

MORGAN

So do you! Well, anyway, you ought to see it.

THE DOOR FLAP PARTS AND CAPTAIN FABIAN ENTERS.

FABIAN

Lieutenant Jackson still here?

SEES JACKSON.

Oh, Jackson. The mail just came in. Do you want to pick up yours here?

JACKSON

Yah...I sure do.

FABIAN

Better call the mail-clerk and tell him not to send it up to your platoon.

JACKSON

Good idea. Which phone is it?

WALTERS

Here. I'll do it.

WALTERS PICKS UP ONE OF THE PHONES, CRANKS IT AND WAITS FOR AN ANSWER. NO RESPONSE. HE CALLS INTO THE PHONE.

Switch!...Hey, switch!

II-1-18

TO THE OTHERS.

I can't get the switchboard.

FERRIN

That damn Bingham. He's probably camping on top of the mail bag. Hold on...I'll crank it again.

FERRIN GIVES THE PHONE A LONG FIERCE CRANK.
WALTERS WAITS FOR A RESPONSE. MEANWHILE, JACKSON
SPEAKS TO FABIAN.

JACKSON

Where you been?

FABIAN

In my hootchie.

SEES THEIR CUPS.

What's this? Coffee-time?

JACKSON

No, Scotch-time.

WALTERS CALLS INTO PHONE.

WALTERS

Switch.

FABIAN

Walters must have got another package from home.

FERRIN CRANKS THE PHONE AGAIN...ANGRILY.

WALTERS

Would you like a drink, Captain?

FABIAN

No, thanks.

WALTERS FINALLY GETS A RESPONSE ON THE PHONE AND

II-1-19

Turns his attention to it. He speaks into the phone.

WALTERS

Switch?...Where the hell you been? I've been ringing like mad.

PAUSE...AND THEN A LAUGH.

Nature be damned. You're always taking one. Hey, listen... is the mail-clerk there?

PAUSE.

No. Just tell him to put Lieutenant Jackson's mail aside. He'll pick it up here. Got that?

PAUSE.

Yah...that's all. Thanks.

WALTERS HANGS UP THE PHONE AS FABIAN TURNS TO SPEAK TO FERRIN.

FABIAN

You'd better tell Bingham to stay on the switchboard. He's going to be missing one of these days when we really need him.

FERRIN

Yes, sir.

THERE IS A PAUSE AND THEN JACKSON BREAKS THE ICE.

JACKSON

What did Little Napoleon have to say?

FABIAN

Nothing good. That's certain.

JACKSON

Another raid?

FABIAN SHAKES HIS HEAD AFFIRMATIVELY.

II-1-20

WALTERS

I knew it. I knew it.

FERRIN

The stupid bastard!

SIMULTANEOUSLY

MORGAN

Humph!

WALTERS

When's it supposed to come off?

FABIAN

Day after tomorrow.

JACKSON

What's he after this time?

WALTERS

A promotion. What do you think?

FABIAN SHUTS UP WALTERS WITH A GLANCE AND THEN
ANSWERS JACKSON.

FABIAN

He wants to send the tanks all the way out to the other end
of the valley.

MORGAN

Again? In all this mud?

FERRIN

When's he going to wise up?

JACKSON

Well...I might as well cart my platoon up to the forward
position.

FABIAN

It's not going to be that easy this time.

II-1-21

JACKSON IS APPREHENSIVE.

JACKSON

Oh...?

FABIAN

I wish it were. Bryan is going to throw a minor frontal attack at the Chinks....tanks, rifle companies, mortars and all.

JACKSON

My God! It sounds like a major campaign.

FABIAN

It's apt to be by the time we're through.

TO WALTERS.

Do we still have our survey data on 197?

WALTERS

Yes, sir, it's around here somewhere.

WALTERS STARTS TO LOOK FOR THE DATA THEN REALIZES THE IMPLICATION OF FABIAN'S QUESTION AND STOPS AND FACES FABIAN.

We're not sending a platoon out there, are we?

FABIAN

It looks like it.

WALTERS

But...good....

JACKSON

Do you mean Bryan wants to....Ohhh!

FERRIN

Jes....What does he think we are? That dumb...stupid....My God, I don't have enough commo wire for a clothesline! How does he expect me to string lines way out there? Don't he realize it takes....

II-1-22

FABIAN INTERRUPTS FERRIN IMPATIENTLY.

FABIAN

All right. Forget, Ferrin. Forget it! That's the situation and there's not a damn thing you or anybody else can do about it. All the raving and swearing in the world won't change things one way or another. So forget it. Don't worry about your communications. I'll get your wire for you.

FERRIN IS SUBDUED.

FERRIN

Yes, sir.

WALTERS

What about barrages, Captain?

FABIAN

We'll have to set them up for all three platoons. I'll have the coordinates for you...probably tonight after the briefing. You and Morgan can set them up tomorrow.

MORGAN

I'd better find the survey data on 197 then.

MORGAN SEARCHES THROUGH THE MATERIAL ON THE TABLE FOR THE DATA.

WALTERS

It should be marked on one of the maps, Morgan.

TO FABIAN.

Which platoon are we sending out there, sir?

FABIAN

It'll have to be Jackson's.

THERE IS A PAUSE WHILE JACKSON DIGESTS THE NEWS.
THEN HE SHAKES HIS HEAD AND SPEAKS.

JACKSON

This just isn't my day. First Walters takes me at pinochle

II-i-23

and now...this. Do you want the whole platoon or just a section?

FABIAN

We'll need the whole platoon. When those tanks get out to the other end of the valley, they'll need all the fire support they can get.

JACKSON

Well...I'm like a steer. I can try.

MORGAN FINDS THE SURVEY DATA AND GIVES IT TO WALTERS.

MORGAN

Here it is, Walters. I think this is all we need.

WALTERS STUDIES THE DATA.

WALTERS

Yah...this is it.

TO FABIAN

This is the data on the position that Lieutenant Milton used at 197. But will Jackson's platoon be in the same place? If not, we'll have to go out and survey it again.

FABIAN

You won't have to worry about surveying. The valley's so small there's really only one place you can set up mortars there. If we don't use the exact spot that Milton was in, we won't be far from it anyway.

WALTERS

Then we won't have to pull a survey.

FABIAN

Well...Jackson, we'd better get started on our recon or we won't get back before dark.

JACKSON

Okay.

II-i-24

FABIAN

Ferrin?

FERRIN

Yes, sir?

FABIAN

You'd better come with us and plot your communications.

TO JACKSON.

By the way, do you want to pick up your computer and take him along? He'll be computing fire out there for your platoon. It'd save time if he went along and found himself a dry spot to set up operations. Besides, he can coordinate with Ferrin.

JACKSON

Oh, my computer....It might be a good idea.

FERRIN

Will I have time to get my mail before we go, sir?

FABIAN

I think so.

FERRIN STARTS FOR THE DOOR AND MORGAN FOLLOWS HIM.

MORGAN

Wait a minute, Ferrin, and I'll go with you. I'll get yours, Walters.

WALTERS

Okay.

JACKSON

Hey, Morgan, get mine while you're at it.

MORGAN

Right.

MORGAN AND FERRIN EXIT. WALTERS TAKES THE SURVEY

II-1-25

DATA TO THE MAP AND BEGINS TO CHECK IT. JACKSON
SPEAKS TO FABIAN.

JACKSON

I'll need some more ammunition before the raid. Do you want
me to send one of my trucks back for it?

FABIAN

No, it won't be necessary. The other platoon will need ammunition,
too. I'll send a truck from here and get it all at once.

JACKSON

Oh, I damn near forgot my driver. Can you drop me off at my
platoon on the way back from recon?

FABIAN

Sure.

JACKSON TURNS TO WALTERS.

JACKSON

Walters? Could you do me a favor?

WALTERS

The Scotch is almost gone.

JACKSON

It's not that. Could you find my driver and tell him I won't
be needing him and that he might as well go back to the platoon?

WALTERS

Sure. Where is he?

JACKSON

Either at the motor pool or at mail-call. Thanks.

WALTERS RETURNS THE SURVEY DATA TO THE TABLE AND
GETS HIS HELMET FROM HIS BUNK.

FABIAN

While you're at it, stop at my hootchie and pick up my map

II-1-26

case and my jacket.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

WALTERS EXITS. FABIAN TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE, GIVES ONE TO JACKSON AND LIGHTS THEM. HE PUSHES A BOX OVER TO THE STOVE AND SITS DOWN.

FABIAN

I...I wish you could use your regular forward position this time. It won't be pleasant going all the way out to 197. I tried to tell Bryan that, but....

FABIAN SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS AS IF TO SAY, "IT DIDN'T DO ANY GOOD."

JACKSON

Yah....When Bryan gets hot for one of his raids, there's not much you can do about it.

FABIAN

I tried to tell him what it was like out there, but it didn't seem to make any impression. I even reminded him of what happened to Milton.

JACKSON

And that made no impression either?

FABIAN

No.

JACKSON

It figures. We...Milton...any of us...we can't make an impression on the man because we've ceased to exist for him...to exist as human beings. He only sees us as so many chessmen.

FABIAN

Do you honestly believe that?

JACKSON

What else can I believe? You can't still believe that he's

II-1-27

just an officer trying to do a job the best he knows how.
Not after this.

FABIAN

I don't know. I honestly don't know. I've been over there in my hootchie ever since Bryan left...sitting there thinking. But my thoughts go around in circles and I don't know what to believe. I want to be fair to him.

JACKSON

But has he played fair with us? Oh, I know I have reason to be bitter where Bryan is concerned. After all, Milton was my best friend. But in spite of that, I like to think I have a pretty objective picture of him. And I don't like what I see...a picture of someone who has forgotten that he's a man living in a world of human beings...someone who has set himself and his ambitions so far above the world of reality that everything else has become just something for him to manipulate for his own satisfaction. He's even forgotten that this is a war. It has become his own private game of chess. What about the Fabians and the Jacksons and the Miltons? Are we the chessmen he can use and expend how and when he likes? And what about the Walters and the Morgans and the Ferrins? ...who even have less chance than we do? Are they merely pawns for Bryan's warped ambition? They're not. God knows they're not! They're men, Fabian. They're flesh and blood ...just like you and me and Bryan. They're men with a life behind them and a life before them...a whole life that we can know nothing about. And because of that, their lives are not something we can use or throw away for the sake of our own ambition...to use and throw away like chessmen. It can't work that way. It must not work that way!

FABIAN

I don't know...I don't know....

FABIAN SHAKES HIS HEAD HOPELESSLY AND JACKSON UTTERS A SHORT IRONIC LAUGH.

JACKSON

Humph! I don't know that I'm any better off than you are. I've watched the chess games until I'm sick...sick of Bryan and every bastard like him. Still...I see but I don't know what to do about it.

FABIAN

And I'm not sure that anything should be done. But...I want

you to know one thing, Jackson. I...if I had my way, you wouldn't go out to 197. Especially not now, with the baby and everything....

JACKSON GIVES FABIAN A SMILE TO TELL HIM THAT HE UNDERSTANDS.

JACKSON

Thanks. And if I had the courage, I'd refuse to go. But it takes a bigger man than me to fight Bryan.

JACKSON MAKES A GESTURE OF DESPAIR.

Oh, what's the use? I've got no choice. I'll follow Bryan's orders like everyone else because I haven't got the guts to do otherwise. I don't mind so much for myself. If it were only me who was concerned, I wouldn't think much about it. But...there's Ruth and the baby. And even more important...there's my platoon. I hate the responsibility of taking them into a trap.

JACKSON FACES FABIAN.

I should be doing just the opposite. I should be fighting for them...giving them a chance because this way, with a man like Bryan, they haven't got a chance.... They've lost their identity and power as human beings--as men....And I stand by and watch Bryan play with his chessmen. My God, Fabian, if I lack the power or the guts or whatever it is I lack to stand up for them, don't you sit idly by. Do something...for God's sake, do something before it's too late!

THERE IS A PAUSE BEFORE JACKSON SPEAKS AGAIN.

Well, we'd better be getting on the road.

JACKSON FINDS HIS JACKET AND PUTS IT ON.

FABIAN CHECKS HIS WATCH.

FABIAN

Why don't you call your platoon and tell the computer to be ready to go?

JACKSON

That's something else that bothers me. My computer.

II-i-29

FABIAN

Barker? Why? What's the matter?

JACKSON

He's not too sharp. Oh, he's all right back at the platoon where he's got someone to help him. But out there he's going to be on his own. God knows things are going to be rough enough without having to worry about his computing. I'd feel a hell of a lot easier if I could take someone else in his place. I just don't want anything to go wrong.

FABIAN

I was hoping we'd get a replacement for him before anything happened. No one can say we haven't given him enough training.

JACKSON

I guess it's not his fault. He tries...he's willing. But it just isn't there.

FABIAN SPEAKS WITH DECISION.

FABIAN

Let's not take a chance. We'll find someone else.

JACKSON

Yah...but who?

AT THAT MOMENT WALTERS ENTERS CARRYING FABIAN'S JACKET AND MAP CASE. JACKSON LAUGHS.

JACKSON

Walters? I'd like to take him out there and show him what a war is really like.

WALTERS

What's that, sir?

JACKSON

I was just saying if I could keep you off of your backside long enough, I'd take you out to 197 and give you something to write home about.

II-1-30

WALTERS LAUGHS.

WALTERS

Over my dead body, you will!

JACKSON

We might even arrange that.

WALTERS CROSSES TO THE TABLE AND PUTS DOWN THE MAP
CASE AND JACKET.

WALTERS

Why do you want me out there? Afraid you can't handle the
job yourself?

JACKSON

Don't give me that stuff. I could run my platoon with one
hand and do your computing with the other.

FABIAN

Walters, we need someone to take Barker's place. Jackson
doesn't think he's up to the job.

WALTERS

He's got a point there all right, sir.

JACKSON

So I suggested taking you in his place.

WALTERS GIVES A QUICK LAUGH.

WALTERS

Oh, no...just because I trounced you at pinochle....

FABIAN

Don't let him pull his rank on you, Walters. You're safe.

TO JACKSON

I'd better keep Walters here to coordinate fire from the pla-
toons.

II-1-31

WALTERS

Phew! That was a close one!

SERIOUSLY.

But if you want me to go, I'm sure Morgan could handle things here.

FABIAN

No, you stay here. Jackson can take Morgan.

WALTERS

Really, I could go. Morgan knows this stuff backwards and forwards.

FABIAN

No, I'd rather have you here.

JACKSON

But, what about Morgan? Do you think he'd be all right? Sure, he knows his stuff, but he's so...I don't know...so dreamy sometimes...so moody. If something happens, he might get all upset.

FABIAN

I don't think you have to worry about Morgan.

JACKSON

I wouldn't want him going to pieces on me out there, that's all.

FABIAN

You'll be okay with Morgan there. He's prone to take things a little more seriously than most, but that shouldn't give you any cause to worry. He's fine as long as he's got something to do...something to take his mind off of himself.

WALTERS

Once he starts working, he's as cool as they come. You'll be safe with Morgan along.

II-i-32

JACKSON

Well, if you say....I just thought it was about time you got a look at the enemy.

WALTERS

There's no hurry. If and when you see one, you can tell me all about it.

THE DOOR FLAP OPENS AND MORGAN AND FERRIN RETURN. MORGAN CARRIES A PACKAGE AND THREE LETTERS. FERRIN HAS TWO LETTERS, ONE OF WHICH HE IS READING AS HE COMES IN. MORGAN HOLDS UP THE PACKAGE AND CALLS TO WALTERS.

MORGAN

Hey, Walters, another bottle of goodies!

MORGAN GIVES THE PACKAGE TO WALTERS WHO INSPECTS IT.

WALTERS

Hmmmm. And just in time, too. The old man really camouflaged this one. He's got enough room here for five or six bottles.

WALTERS BEGINS TO UNWRAP THE PACKAGE AS FERRIN CROSSES TO JACKSON AND GIVES HIM A LETTER IN A BLUE ENVELOPE. FERRIN IS ALL SMILES.

FERRIN

Here's one for you, Lieutenant. It's from your wife, I'll bet. Blue stationery.

JACKSON TAKES THE LETTER AND LOOKS AT FERRIN QUIZICALLY.

JACKSON

What's the matter with you?

FERRIN

Nothing. Why?

JACKSON

You're lit up like a Christmas tree. I haven't seen a smile

II-i-33

like that on your kisser in months.

FERRIN

Can't a guy smile once in a while?

FERRIN GOES BACK TO HIS OWN LETTER AS JACKSON OPENS HIS AND STARTS TO READ.

FABIAN

Well, Jackson, what's the verdict. Are you or aren't you?

JACKSON

Let me see.

JACKSON READS ON FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SITS BACK IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

She's still waiting. She says if it's a boy, she wants to name him after me.

WALTERS

Well, I should hope so.

WALTERS OPENS HIS PACKAGE AND LOOKS IN. A LOOK OF UTTER DISAPPOINTMENT CROSSES HIS FACE.

Well, I'll be....My God! What does she expect me to do with this.

EVERYONE LOOKS UP FROM THEIR LETTERS.

MORGAN

What's the matter now?

WALTERS TAKES AN ELECTRICAL HEATING PAD OUT OF THE PACKAGE AND HOLDS IT UP.

WALTERS

My mother! That's what I admire most in a woman. Practicality.

WALTERS RUMMAGES THROUGH THE PACKAGE THROWING PAPER ON THE FLOOR.

II-i-34

Oh, come now! There must be a bottle in here somewhere! No such luck.

WALTERS DROPS THE EMPTY BOX ON THE FLOOR AND HOLDS UP THE HEATING PAD SCORNFULLY.

Of all the lowdown, dirty practical jokes...this takes the cake.

MORGAN GIVES WALTERS A MOCKING LAUGH.

MORGAN

Hah! Were you ever surprised.

WALTERS

Don't laugh, boy. I've got a surprise for you, too.

MORGAN GRINS EXPECTANTLY.

MORGAN

What's that?

FABIAN

Morgan, you're going with Lieutenant Jackson out to 197 to compute for his platoon.

MORGAN SLOWLY LOWERS HIS LETTER AND LOOKS AT FABIAN. HIS VOICE IS QUIET AND LOW AND ALMOST IN-AUDIBLE.

MORGAN

Oh?

FABIAN

I want him to have a computer out there who knows what he's doing. We can't trust Barker and we need Walters here.

WALTERS

So you're elected.

FABIAN

It will ease my mind if I know you're doing Jackson's computing.

II-i-35

Jackson's, too, for that matter.

MORGAN'S VOICE IS STILL QUIET AND LOW.

MORGAN

Yes, sir. Do...do you want me to go on recon with you then?

FABIAN

It would be a good idea.

MORGAN MAKES A MOVE TOWARD HIS BUNK.

MORGAN

I'll get my coat.

WALTERS

Sir, I'd like to go with you if I may. Morgan could stay here and I could give him the scoop when I come back this evening.

FABIAN

It makes no difference to me. But one of you should go.

WALTERS

Is it all right with you, Morgan, if I go on the recon?

MORGAN

I guess so...if you want to.

WALTERS GETS HIS COAT AND RIFLE.

WALTERS

You see, Lieutenant, I can get off my back-side when I want to.

JACKSON IS BUTTONING HIS JACKET AND PUTTING ON HIS HELMET. FABIAN GETS HIS COAT FROM THE TABLE AND PUTS IT ON.

JACKSON

It'll take more than this to prove it to me.

II-i-36

FABIAN

Are you ready, Ferrin?

FERRIN

Yes, sir, as soon as I get my carbine.

FABIAN STARTS TOWARD THE DOOR.

FABIAN

Let's go then.

JACKSON TURNS TO WALTERS AND SPEAKS WITH MOCK GRUFFNESS.

JACKSON

Get a move on, Walters. You're holding up the war. God, you're slow!

WALTERS

Go easy there, Lieutenant, or you'll blow a gasket.

JACKSON

You'd better watch who you're talking to, Sergeant. One of these days I'll pull my rank on you.

FABIAN

Bring my map, Walters. It's there on the table.

FABIAN EXITS FOLLOWED BY FERRIN AND JACKSON.
JACKSON CALLS BACK TO WALTERS AS HE GOES OUT
THE DOOR.

JACKSON

Come on, Walters. We're waiting.

WALTERS

I'm coming.

WALTERS GETS FABIAN'S MAP AND CROSSES TO THE DOOR.

See you when I get back, Morgan.

II-1-37

MORGAN

Yah.

WALTERS EXITS. MORGAN CROSSES TO THE DOOR AND WATCHES THEM LEAVE. HE CROSSES BACK TO HIS BUNK, PICKS UP HIS LETTER AND MOVES TO THE TABLE. HE SITS AT THE TABLE AND STARTS TO READ HIS LETTER. HE IS TOO DISTURBED TO READ; HE STARES OFF INTO SPACE. PRESENTLY, HIS EYES LIGHT UPON THE MAP ON THE TABLE. HE FINGERS THE MAP FOR A MOMENT.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

Scene 2

THE FIRE DIRECTION HOOTCHIE.
THE MORNING OF THE RAID. THE
TABLE HAS BEEN CLEARED OF ITS
PREVIOUS LITTER AND IS NOW PRE-
PARED FOR THE DIRECTION OF MORTAR
FIRE. A COMPUTING BOARD IS ON
THE LEFT HALF OF THE TABLE AND
THE FIELD RADIO HAS BEEN SET UP
ON THE OTHER HALF. THE TELEPHONES
ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TABLE;
TWO MORE TELEPHONES HAVE BEEN
ADDED MAKING FOUR IN ALL. THE
DOOR FLAP IS CLOSED AND THE FRUIT
CAN IS ON THE STOVE.

AS THE CURTAIN RISES, SERGEANT WALTERS IS STANDING
AT THE LARGE SITUATION MAP WITH A SMALL SCALE RULER
IN HIS HAND, ASCERTAINING THE COORDINATES OF A SPOT
IN NO MAN'S LAND. HE TURNS AND RIGHTS THE DATA ON
A PIECE OF PAPER WHICH LIES ON THE TABLE. A TELE-
PHONE RINGS. HE PICKS UP ONE PHONE, ANSWERS IT AND
FINDS IT DEAD. HE REPEATS THE PROCESS WITH A SECOND
PHONE. FINALLY, ON THE THIRD ATTEMPT, HE LOCATES
THE RIGHT PHONE. HE SPEAKS INTO THE PHONE.

WALTERS

Green fire direction. (PAUSE) Oh. Is that you, lieutenant?
(PAUSE) I thought it was. It's good to hear your voice. I'm
glad the lines are working now. Can you hear me okay? (PAUSE)
Good. Is Ferrin still there? (PAUSE) Well then, he ought to
be back here in a few minutes. How are things going? (PAUSE)
Nothing, huh? No sign of any activity? (PAUSE) Well, it
won't be long now. The rifle companies left about an hour ago.
(PAUSE) What's that, Lieutenant Jackson? (PAUSE) You're
what? (PAUSE--AND THEN A LAUGH) Ahhh....I feel for you. Wait
until you start firing. You'll warm up fast enough. (PAUSE--
AND ANOTHER LAUGH) Oh, that's sad! What'll your wife say
when you go home without them? (PAUSE--AND LAUGHS AGAIN) The
hell she will! (PAUSE) What? (PAUSE) Sorry. The Captain's
not here. He went up to the observation post a couple of hours
ago. (PAUSE) Yah, I will. Sure, Well...take it easy.

WALTERS REPLACES THE TELEPHONE IN ITS CASE, PICKS

II-ii-2

UP A PENCIL AND THE SCALE RULER AND BEGINS WORKING OVER HIS FIRE CHART WHICH IS ON THE TABLE. PRESENTLY THE DOOR FLAP OPENS AND FERRIN ENTERS.

FERRIN

Ye gods! Let me in where it's warm!

WALTERS LOOKS UP FROM HIS WORK.

WALTERS

Hi....

FERRIN CROSSES TO HIS BUNK, PUTS DOWN HIS CARBINE AND TAKES OFF HIS JACKET.

FERRIN

Phew....Thank God that's done!

WALTERS

Get your wires strung?

FERRIN LOOKS AT WALTERS WITH EXASPERATION.

FERRIN

Well, I ain't been out playing volley-ball!

WALTERS LOOKS AT FERRIN, SHAKES HIS HEAD HOPELESSLY AND GOES BACK TO HIS WORK.

FERRIN

Any coffee?

WALTERS

There should be some in the pot. But we're out of sugar.

FERRIN

I don't use sugar anyway.

FERRIN PICKS UP HIS CUP FROM HIS BUNK AND CROSSES TO THE STOVE. WHEN HE SPEAKS TO WALTERS THERE IS AN EFFORT ON HIS PART TO BE A LITTLE MORE PLEASANT.

II-ii-3

Got your barrages plotted?

WALTERS

Yah. Morgan and I set them up last night.

FERRIN LOOKS INTO THE CAN ON THE STOVE.

FERRIN

Hmmmm! That smells good. Want a cup?

WALTERS GOES ON WITH HIS WORK.

WALTERS

No, thanks. Just finished one a little while ago.

FERRIN POURS HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE AND SINKS ONTO A BOX BY THE STOVE WITH A SIGH.

FERRIN

Ahhh! I sure wish I'd had a cup of this about three hours ago.

WALTERS

Humph!

THERE IS A PAUSE DURING WHICH FERRIN TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE AND LIGHTS IT BEFORE HE MAKES ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT CONVERSATION.

FERRIN

It's getting pretty light outside.

WALTERS

Yah. The sun ought to be up in a few minutes. Maybe it'll dry the ground out a bit.

FERRIN

Humph! It'll take more than the sun to dry that ground out.

WALTERS

I was just talking to Jackson, so your line's working all right now. What was wrong with it?

II-ii-4

FERRIN

Got chopped up. I had to string it over the road yesterday, so I put up some poles. Then some stupid S.B. swiped the poles and laid the lines across the road and when the tanks moved up last night, they chewed it all to hell.

WALTERS

Ferrin, you just can't win.

FERRIN

That's no lie...not in this racket, at least. I'd like to get my hands on the bright boy that swiped my poles. I wouldn't hesitate five seconds to slit his throat!

WALTERS LAUGHS.

WALTERS

Now!

FERRIN

I wouldn't by damn! It's no joke crawling through that wet brush looking for a break in the wire. 'Specially when it's so damn dark you can't see your hand in front of your face. And cold! Ummmm! I'd like to died! My fingers were so stiff it's all I could do to find the wire! Just let me catch that bright boy!

WALTERS

Did you take Jackson a new radio battery?

FERRIN

Yah, and I even put it in for him.

WALTERS

I was wondering. They haven't checked in on the net yet.

FERRIN

Oh, hell, that reminds me. I told Jackson I'd check him on the net when I got back. I'd better get myself in gear.

FERRIN RISES AND CROSSES TO THE RIGHT END OF THE TABLE WHERE HIS FIELD RADIO IS SET UP.

II-11-5

What about first platoon and third?

WALTERS

They're okay. They just called in a little while ago.

FERRIN

Thank the Lord for that.

HE PICKS UP THE RADIO TRANSMITTER AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

Invisible Baker calling Invisible Dog. Invisible Baker calling Invisible Dog. Over. (PAUSE) Invisible Dog, this is Invisible Baker. I read you one by two. Repeat. I read you one by two. How do you read me? Repeat. How me? Over.

HE WAITS FOR A RESPONSE AND THEN MUTTERS TO HIMSELF.

Dammit!

HE SPEAKS AGAIN INTO THE RADIO.

Invisible Dog, this is Invisible Baker. Suggest you give me long count. Give me long count. Over.

HE LISTENS AND THEN ADJUSTS THE RADIO KNOBS. HE SPEAKS INTO THE RADIO.

Invisible Dog, this is Invisible Baker. Invisible Dog, I read you loud and clear. Repeat. I read you five by five. How me? Over. (PAUSE) Invisible Baker out.

FERRIN LAYS ASIDE THE RADIO RECEIVER WITH A SIGH OF RELIEF.

Phew! They're coming through as clear as a bell. I wasn't so sure that old radio would even work.

WALTERS

Did you see Morgan when you were up there?

FERRIN

Yah.

WALTERS

How was he taking it?

II-11-6

FERRIN

All right, I guess. At least he was all right when I left. He was busy setting up his board and lining up the mortars. Why?

WALTERS

Oh, I was just wondering. He didn't look too happy when he left here last night.

FERRIN

Jackson said he was a little nervous riding up there last night, but he didn't seem to be nervous to me. I wouldn't blame him, though, if he was. I'd be jumpy myself if I had to spend the day up there. God, it's a mess! The paddies are just like sponges.

WALTERS FINISHES HIS WORK, TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE
AND RELAXES.

WALTERS

I don't envy them. They'll be digging the mortars out after every round.

FERRIN

You said it. Just wait. When the sun gets out and melts the frost, it's going to be bad. Muddy as all get out. Right now it's worse than it was the other day when we were up there on recon. And you know how rotten it was then.

WALTERS

But...it's had two days to dry out since then.

FERRIN

The sun hasn't helped a damn bit. In fact, I think it's made it worse, if anything.

WALTERS

God Almighty, it beats me why the Captain ever put the platoon out there in the first place. He must have been off his nut. He knows what happened the last time we went out there.

II-11-7

FERRIN

From what I hear, he didn't have no choice.

WALTERS

Ah, phooey! To hell he didn't!

FERRIN

To hell he did! From what Lieutenant Jackson was telling me....

FERRIN STOPS, UNDECIDED AS TO WHETHER OR NOT TO GO ON.

WALTERS

Well...what did Jackson say?

FERRIN

Well...nothing really...that is, nothing definite.

WALTERS

Come on....

FERRIN

It was more the way he said it. I got the impression that the Captain didn't want to put a platoon out at 197.

WALTERS

Why did he send Jackson out there then?

FERRIN

Evidently it was Colonel Bryan's idea. Jackson was just telling me that the Captain didn't agree with Bryan at all.

WALTERS IS INTERESTED.

WALTERS

No kidding? What happened?

FERRIN

Damned if I know. I sorta got the idea that they had an

II-ii-8

argument. Anyway...we still sent Jackson out to 197.

WALTERS

Little Napoleon and his brain-storms! The Captain should have just flatly refused.

FERRIN

Sure...just like that.

WALTERS

Just like that! It's time he told Bryan where to get off. He's the one to do it. God knows, we can't. If he had any back-bone at all....

FERRIN INTERRUPTS.

FERRIN

What the Christ are you so up in the air about? You ain't been....

THE DOOR FLAP OPENS AND CAPTAIN FABIAN COMES IN.
FERRIN STOPS TALKING WHEN HE SEES FABIAN ENTER.
FABIAN SPEAKS AS HE ENTERS.

FABIAN

How are things going back here?

WALTERS' REPLY IS EDGED WITH SARCASM.

WALTERS

Everything's smooth as glass, Captain.

FABIAN IS UNAWARE OF THE SARCASM.

FABIAN

That's the first good thing I've heard today. I hope it stays that way. Have you got communications with Jackson yet?

FERRIN

The line's fixed, sir.

II-ii-9

WALTERS

I just talked to him a minute or so ago.

FABIAN

Get him for me, will you?

FABIAN CROSSES INTO THE TABLE AND WALTERS PICKS
UP ONE OF THE PHONES AND CRANKS IT.

His line to the regimental O.P. is out.

FERRIN

Ahhhh, nuts!

FABIAN

Have they answered yet?

WALTERS

Not yet, sir.

FABIAN TAKES THE PHONE FROM WALTERS.

FABIAN

Here. Let me take the phone. Now, crank it again.

WALTERS CRANKS THE PHONE.

FERRIN

Do you want me to trace down the O.P. line, Captain, and see
what's the matter?

FABIAN

No, I'll get one of Jackson's commo men to do it. We're short-
handed here as it is. We'll need you to operate the radio and
help Walters in case anything should happen.

TO WALTERS

What's Jackson's call sign out there?

WALTERS

Green two forward, sir.

II-11-10

FABIAN FINALLY GETS A RESPONSE ON THE PHONE AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

FABIAN

Green two forward? (PAUSE) Where've you been? Better stay on your phone. We'll be needing you before long. (PAUSE) Morgan, let me talk to Jackson. (PAUSE) Jackson, do you know your line to the regimental O.P. is out? (PAUSE) No, you'll have to send one of your men...if you can spare one. The only commo man we have back here is Ferrin and he's going to be busy. (PAUSE) Good. Maybe you won't need your O.P. line, but it's a good idea to have it working just in case. (PAUSE) What? (PAUSE) Oh, so far, so good. The tanks are starting out toward the other end of the valley now. You'd better alert your men. If the tanks bog down, you'll be firing like hell. (PAUSE) What's that? (PAUSE) Oh, Bryan's all right, I guess. He hasn't had much to say to me so far this morning.

AT THE MENTION OF BRYAN'S NAME, WALTERS AND FERRIN EXCHANGE SIGNIFICANT LOOKS. FABIAN STILL SPEAKS INTO THE PHONE.

FABIAN

Hold the line a minute.

TO FERRIN.

Do you have radio contact with second platoon?

FERRIN

Yes, sir. I can read them loud and clear.

FABIAN SPEAKS AGAIN INTO THE PHONE.

FABIAN

Nothing. Just checking our radio contact with you. (PAUSE) Yes, it's all right. I'll call you later if I hear anything.

FABIAN REPLACES THE PHONE IN ITS CASE ON THE TABLE.

Well...that's that. Got your board ready, Walters?

WALTERS

All set up, sir. Morgan and I plotted the barrages last

II-ii-11

night before he left.

FERRIN

How's things going out there, sir?

FABIAN SITS DOWN BY THE STOVE.

FABIAN

Oh, pretty good. In fact, too good. The raid on Kemwa went off without a hitch. We burned the village to the ground but no sign of a Chink. When I left the O.P. the tanks were already on their way out to the other end of the valley...and the rifle companies were just preparing to follow them.

WALTERS

Has there been much firing?

FABIAN

Not much. Only ours. The Chinks haven't fired a round yet.

WALTERS

Hmmmm! That's funny.

FABIAN

That's what I thought...and I don't like it.

FERRIN

Their up to something, you can be sure of that.

FABIAN

Sure, they are. They're leading us on...waiting until we get into the rice paddies at the far end of the valley. Well ...it won't be much longer. Then we'll see some action.

WALTERS

Wait until the tanks hit those paddies. They're going to sink out of sight. Then we'll be up all night firing while someone goes out and tows them back in.

FERRIN

Yah, but try to tell Colonel Bryan that.

II-ii-12

FERRIN WATCHES FABIAN FOR A REACTION, BUT THERE IS NONE. SO FERRIN GOES ON.

Any sign of the Chinks on the hills?

FABIAN

They're up there, but they're keeping out of sight as much as possible. No doubt they're grouping on the reverse slopes. I've been watching 403 like the proverbial hawk.

WALTERS

See anything?

FABIAN

Occasionally you see them. But it's hard to tell just what they're up to.

FABIAN TAKES OFF HIS JACKET AND HELMET AND THROWS THEM ON ONE OF THE BUNKS.

FERRIN

Aren't you going back up to the observation post?

FABIAN

Not for a while. I think Bryan can get along without me.

FERRIN AND WALTERS EXCHANGE GLANCES AGAIN.

WALTERS

Don't you want to watch the show, sir?

FABIAN

No, I've seen it all before. Jackson's observer is there to direct fire. He'll relay his messages through here until Jackson gets his line repaired. So there's really nothing for me to do there but keep the Colonel happy. I'll go up after a while and give the observer a break.

FERRIN

I thought Colonel Bryan would want you up at the O.P.

FERRIN IS STILL LOOKING FOR A REACTION FROM FABIAN.

II-ii-13

FABIAN

I told him I would keep in touch with him from this end of the line...until Jackson's O.P. line is repaired. I want to keep in direct contact with Jackson for a while.

THE REGIMENTAL PHONE RINGS.

WALTERS

I'll get it.

WALTERS PICKS UP THE PHONE AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

Green fire direction. (PAUSE) Yes, sir. Will do. (PAUSE) What's that, sir? (PAUSE) O.K.. We're ready here, sir.

WALTERS REPLACES THE PHONE AND TURNS TO FABIAN.

That was the regimental O.P., sir. Said the tanks are approaching the rice paddies...and for us to be ready. They'll fire the first and third platoons from their own observers unless they need to converge fire.

FABIAN

Call Jackson and tell him to have the platoon stand by.

FERRIN

Well, here we go.

WALTERS PICKS UP THE PLATOON PHONE, CRANKS IT, WAITS AND THEN SPEAKS INTO IT.

WALTERS

Morgan? The tanks are in the paddies so tell the platoon to stand by. (PAUSE) Stay on your phone and I'll....(PAUSE) If you're busy, put someone else on the phone then and I'll stay on this one.

WALTERS SITS DOWN ON THE BOX BY HIS COMPUTING BOARD AND HOLDS THE PHONE NEAR HIS EAR.

FERRIN

Got a cigarette, Walters?

WALTERS TAKES OUT HIS PACK OF CIGARETTES AND TOSSES

II-ii-14

IT TO FERRIN WHO TAKES ONE AND THROWS THE PACK BACK TO WALTERS. WALTERS TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE AND ACCEPTS A LIGHT FROM FERRIN.

WALTERS

I'll leave them here in case you want one later.

WALTERS THROWS HIS CIGARETTES ONTO THE TABLE MIDWAY BETWEEN HIM AND FERRIN AS THE REGIMENTAL PHONE RINGS. FERRIN AND WALTERS BOTH REACH FOR THE PHONE. WALTERS TAKES IT AND ANSWERS.

WALTERS

Green fire direction. (PAUSE) Yes, sir.

TO FABIAN.

It's for you, Captain. Colonel Bryan, I think.

FABIAN TAKES THE PHONE FROM WALTERS AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

FABIAN

Captain Fabian. (PAUSE) So they're finally beginning to show themselves. (PAUSE) All right, I'll have the platoon set on the barrages and stand by.

FABIAN REPLACES THE PHONE AND SPEAKS TO WALTERS.

Get me second platoon. The Chinks have finally come out of their holes.

WALTERS GIVES FABIAN THE PLATOON PHONE HE HAS BEEN HOLDING SINCE HIS LAST CONVERSATION WITH MORGAN.

WALTERS

Here, sir. Someone should be on it.

FABIAN TAKES THE PHONE AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

FABIAN

Green two forward? (PAUSE) Green two forward. (PAUSE) Jackson? Fabian. The Chinks are starting to move around a bit. Looks like they might be grouping to come down the mountains. (PAUSE) Right. You'd better set one section on

II-ii-15

George barrage and the other on Howe. (PAUSE) Ohhh...prepare about ten rounds per gun. That'll be enough until we know what they're up to. (PAUSE) No, he didn't say anything about the Chinks on 403. I'll keep you posted on them though, if I learn anything. (PAUSE) Let me know when the guns are up and ready to fire.

FABIAN GIVES THE PHONE BACK TO WALTERS WHO HOLDS IT NEAR HIS EAR.

Jackson'll let you know when the guns are up. Then I can call Bryan and tell him.

FABIAN LOOKS AT THE COLLECTION OF PHONES AND THEN AT THE TWO MEN AND SHAKES HIS HEAD.

Humph! We certainly could use Morgan back here today.

FERRIN

Or anyone else for that matter.

FABIAN

Well, as long as I'm here, I am as well make myself useful. Let's see, Walters, I'll handle the regimental phone and leave you free to take Jackson's platoon.

WALTERS

Ferrin, could you watch the other platoon phones? I might get busy on the board if they should want to converge fire.

FERRIN

Sure. We won't need the radio anyway unless the lines go out.

WALTERS

Don't even say that!

FERRIN

Oh, it wouldn't surprise me. It'd be just our luck.

FERRIN MOVES HIS RADIO ACROSS THE TABLE CLOSER TO THE PLATOON PHONES AND THEN MOVES A BOX INTO PLACE BY THE RADIO. THE REGIMENTAL PHONE RINGS AND

II-11-16

FABIAN ANSWERS IT.

FABIAN

Captain Fabian.

HE PAUSES AND THEN SPEAKS AND MOVES WITH QUICK EFFICIENCY.

I'll have them fire as soon as they're up. I'll tell you when the rounds are on the way. Stand by.

TO WALTERS

The whole damn Chink army is swarming down the mountains. Tell Jackson to fire the barrages. Five rounds per gun.

WALTERS SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

WALTERS

Green two forward. Fire George and Howe as soon as you're up. Five rounds per gun!

FABIAN

I thought so. I knew they were grouping back there.

WALTERS

They're up, sir.

WALTERS LISTENS INTO THE PHONE AND THEN SPEAKS AGAIN TO FABIAN.

On the way!

FABIAN SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

FABIAN

Bryan? The rounds are on the way!

HE LISTENS A MOMENT THEN SPEAKS TO WALTERS.

Repeat!

WALTERS SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

II-ii-17

WALTERS

Platoon two. Repeat mission!

TO FABIAN.

How did they look, sir?

FABIAN

Beautiful, he said.

FERRIN

Where are we firing?

FABIAN

Right into the middle of the Chinks. On the slopes in front of the tanks.

WALTERS

On the way! They should be there by now, sir.

FABIAN SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

FABIAN

On the way! They should be there by now, Colonel.

WALTERS

Number three gun out of action! They've gotta dig it out. The grounds muddy.

FABIAN

Hell! Well...that's better than I expected. I thought they'd all be buried by this time.

HE PAUSES AND LISTENS TO HIS PHONE.

Good. (PAUSE) Sure, we can. How far do you want it to move to the right?

LISTENS AND THEN SPEAKS TO WALTERS.

Move the barrages about sixty yards to the right and repeat mission.

II-11-18

WALTERS CONSULTS HIS FIRE CHART ON THE TABLE AND
COMPUTES THE MISSION.

WALTERS

Let's see.

HE SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

Platoon two. Traverse half turn right. Repeat mission! Let
me know when three gun is back in action.

FABIAN

What barrage is three gun firing?

WALTERS AGAIN CONSULTS HIS FIRE CHART.

WALTERS

That'll be Howe barrage, sir.

FABIAN SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

FABIAN

Bryan? Howe barrage will be smaller this time. We've got a
gun out of action.

HE PAUSES AND THEN SPEAKS INTO THE PHONE IN A VOICE
EDGED WITH ANGER.

It can't be helped, Colonel. Goddam it! The guns are sinking
in the mud!

FERRIN GRINS AND GLANCES AT WALTERS WHO IS TRYING
TO CONTROL A SMILE. FABIAN LOWERS HIS PHONE AND
MUTTERS.

FABIAN

I don't know why Jackson sent an observer up to the O.P. It
sounds like Bryan's directing all the fire.

WALTERS

On the way!

FABIAN RAISES HIS PHONE AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

II-11-19

FABIAN

On the way, Colonel.

WALTERS

Three gun back in action.

FERRIN

That's speed for you.

WALTERS

Yah, pretty fast. The gun crews will earn their money today.

FABIAN

Jackson has a damn sharp outfit.

HE LISTENS TO HIS PHONE AND THEN SPEAKS INTO IT
WITH EXCITEMENT.

What's that again? (PAUSE) My God! Well, I've been waiting for it. (PAUSE) Hold on. I'll see.

TO WALTERS.

Can our other platoons fire on 403?

WALTERS

Yes, sir. They've got concentrations marked there already.

FABIAN SPEAKS WITH CONTROLLED EXCITEMENT.

FABIAN

Ferrin, get the other platoons. Tell the computers to open fire on Hill 403. Their own observers can direct the fire. The Chinks are moving right down the ridge of 403!

FERRIN GRABS ONE OF THE PLATOON PHONES AND CRANKS IT.

FERRIN

Toward Jackson?

II-11-20

FABIAN

It looks like it.

FERRIN SPEAKS INTO ONE OF THE PLATOON PHONES WHILE
FABIAN LISTENS TO HIS PHONE AND THEN SPEAKS TO
WALTERS.

FERRIN

FABIAN

Green one? Is that you?
Morrell? Direct fire on
Hill 403. Your observer
can direct. (PAUSE)
Hell, I don't know. Wait
a minute.

Repeat!

WALTERS

Platoon two. Repeat
mission.

FERRIN

Captain, platoon one is firing barrages. What do you want
them to do?

FABIAN

Tell them to put a section on barrages and the other on Hill
403.

FERRIN SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

FERRIN

Morrell? Put one section on 403 and leave the other on bar-
rages.

WALTERS

On the way!

FABIAN SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

FABIAN

On the way, Colonel!

FERRIN RINGS THE OTHER PLATOON ON THE REMAINING
PHONE, WAITS FOR A ANSWER AND THEN SPEAKS INTO THE
PHONE.

FERRIN

Platoon three? Regiment request fire on Hill 403. Let your

II-ii-21

observer adjust your fire. (PAUSE) Yah, I know. But put one section on Hill 403 anyway. (PAUSE) For chrissake! It's not my order! That's from regiment. The Chinks are moving right down 403! (PAUSE) Okay. Fire 'em when your observer's ready.

WALTERS

Sir, one and two guns out of action. They're digging out.

FABIAN

Damn that mud!

INTO HIS PHONE.

Bryan? We can't fire George barrage for a while. The guns are out of action. (PAUSE) I can't help that, goddam it. The guns are sinking in the mud! (PAUSE) Hell, no, we can't fire them as they are. We'd be a mile off target! (PAUSE) I won't fire them as they are...unless you want to take full responsibility for it. There's no way of telling where the shells might land out there. (PAUSE) Sure, I'll fire them just as soon as we can get the mortars out of the mud. (PAUSE) Well, what in hell did you expect?

FABIAN IS TRYING TO CONTROL HIS ANGER. WALTERS AND FERRIN HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO FABIAN WITH INTEREST AND AMUSEMENT. WALTERS IS STILL LISTENING TO HIS PHONE WHEN SUDDENLY HE REACTS EXCITEDLY TO SOMETHING HE HAS HEARD.

WALTERS

Oh, oh! Something happened!

FERRIN REACTS TO WALTERS EXCLAMATION BUT FABIAN IS TOO BUSY TALKING TO BRYAN TO NOTICE. FABIAN SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

FABIAN

I can't switch the other platoons to barrages right now. They're already covering 403 and firing their own concentration at the same time...a section on each. (PAUSE) All right. All right!

TO WALTERS

Repeat Howe with three and four guns.

II-11-22

WALTERS IS STILL LISTENING INTENTLY TO HIS PHONE.
WHEN HE SPEAKS TO FABIAN, THERE IS EXCITEMENT IN
HIS VOICE.

WALTERS

In-coming mail! The Chinks must be blasting the platoon!

FABIAN

Oh, God! Get Jackson and see what's going on!

WALTERS CALLS INTO HIS PHONE.

WALTERS

Lieutenant! Lieutenant!

WALTERS LISTENS TO HIS PHONE. FABIAN AND FERRIN
WATCH WALTERS, WAITING FOR INFORMATION.

FERRIN

What's he say?

WALTERS

I haven't got him yet....Lieutenant! Lieutenant Jackson!

WALTERS REACTS TO IN-COMING ROUNDS AND THEN SPEAKS
TO THE OTHERS.

Another volley! Sounds too light for artillery. The Chinks
must have cut loose with their mortars.

INTO HIS PHONE.

Lieutenant! Morgan! Morgan!

TO FABIAN AND FERRIN.

Wait a minute. I can hear their voices. Somebody's by the
phone.

INTO HIS PHONE.

Morgan! Morgan!

HE PAUSES AND THEN SPEAKS TO FABIAN.

II-ii-23

I just heard Jackson tell his men to take cover. Just a minute. I can hear them yelling.

FERRIN

For crissake!

FABIAN QUICKLY TAKES UP THE REGIMENTAL PHONE.

FABIAN

Keep calling Jackson!

INTO HIS PHONE.

Bryan. Jackson's platoon's pinned down by mortar fire. What the hell's going on out there? (PAUSE) We can't fire the goddam barrages! I tell you, they're pinned down! Can you see where the mortar fire's coming from?

WALTERS SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE QUICKLY.

WALTERS

Yah. Yah, I'm here. What's going on? (PAUSE) Ohhh!

TO FABIAN.

It's mortars all right, sir. Jackson said they just hit one of our trucks!

FABIAN

Ohhh....

INTO HIS PHONE.

Bryan, can you see where the mortar fire's coming from? (PAUSE) Well, let me know when you locate it. They just hit one of Jackson's trucks!

HE LOWERS HIS PHONE AND MUTTERS.

God...God....Walters, tell Jackson to keep his men down.

WALTERS SPEAKS INTO HIS PHONE.

WALTERS

Lieutenant! Jackson!...Good God! They hit something that

II-11-24

time! Lieutenant! Lieutenant!

FABIAN CROSSES TO WALTERS.

FABIAN

What was it?

FERRIN

If they hit the wires....

WALTERS IS STILL CALLING INTO HIS PHONE.

WALTERS

Lieutenant? Yah, I'm still here. (PAUSE) What's that? I can't hear you! (PAUSE) Ohhh...no! Anybody in the pit?

TO FABIAN EXCITEDLY.

They just got a direct hit on number three gun. Set the ammo off!

FERRIN

Get 'em out of there!

FABIAN

Anybody hurt?

WALTERS

He doesn't know yet. He's checking now!

FABIAN HURRIES BACK TO PICK UP THE REGIMENTAL PHONE.

FABIAN

Oh, God! I knew...I knew...I knew!

INTO HIS PHONE.

Bryan! Bryan! What about that mortar fire?

WALTERS

Another truck must be on fire. I can hear them yelling!

II-II-25

FERRIN

Tell 'em to put someone on the radio!

WALTERS

Good hell....They're really coming in now! Morgan! I'll bet he's digging a hole fast as hell.

FERRIN CROSSES TO WALTERS AND STANDS CLOSE BESIDE HIM. WALTERS TURNS THE PHONE RECEIVER SO THAT THEY BOTH CAN HEAR.

FABIAN

God!

FABIAN LISTENS TO HIS PHONE, A HORRIFIED EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE.

Are you sure? Ohhhh....

FABIAN DROPS HIS PHONE, RUNS TO WALTERS, TAKES THE PHONE FROM HIM AND YELLS INTO IT.

Jackson! The Chinks have broken through on your flank! They're heading for 197! Jackson!...Jackson!...Get the platoon out of there!

FERRIN IS ALMOST SPEECHLESS AND WALTERS MUTTERS WHAT MIGHT BE A PRAYER.

WALTERS

God! Oh, God!

FERRIN

Chrisssssss....

FABIAN STILL YELLS INTO THE PLATOON PHONE.

FABIAN

Jackson!...Can you hear me?...Jackson! Jackson! Jackson! The line's dead! The goddam line's dead!

WALTER AND FERRIN STAND FOR A MOMENT, STUNNED AND THEN FERRIN RUSHES TO THE RADIO SET AND IMMEDIATELY BEGINS TO CALL FOR "INVISIBLE DOG." WALTERS TAKES

II-ii-26

THE PHONE FROM FABIAN.

WALTERS

Let me try!

FERRIN

Invisible Dog! Invisible Dog! This is Invisible Baker.
Over!

FABIAN

It's dead! Dead!

FERRIN

The Chinks are jamming the net! I can't get a thing!

FABIAN QUICKLY PICKS UP THE REGIMENTAL PHONE, HESITATES A MOMENT AND THEN REPLACES IT WITHOUT MAKING THE CALL. HE SPEAKS TO WALTERS.

FABIAN

Keep trying to get Jackson.

TO FERRIN.

And stay on the radio. I'm going back up to the O.P. and see what's going on.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

FABIAN QUICKLY PICKS UP HIS JACKET AND HELMET.

FABIAN

Keep trying. Call me at the O.P. if you get Jackson. I've got to see what's happening.

FABIAN EXITS HURRIEDLY. WALTERS CALLS INTO THE PHONE.

WALTERS

Jackson!...Jackson!...Morgan!

II-II-27

FERRIN CALLS ON THE RADIO.

FERRIN

Invisible Dog! This is Invisible Baker. Over!

WALTERS CALLS INTO THE PHONE MORE URGENTLY.

WALTERS

Morgan!...Morgan!...Morgan!

TO FERRIN.

The line's gone....

FERRIN CALLS AGAIN INTO THE RADIO.

FERRIN

Invisible Dog! Invisible Dog!

TO WALTERS.

It's no use....

WALTERS LOWERS THE PHONE. HE AND FERRIN LOOK AT
EACH OTHER HOPELESSLY.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

THE SCENE IS THE SAME AS IN ACT II. THE TIME IS ABOUT ONE-THIRTY THE FOLLOWING MORNING. THE SET IS DIMLY LIGHTED, PRESUMABLY BY THE SINGLE LIGHT OVER THE TABLE.

SERGEANT WALTERS IS SEATED ON A BOX WITH HIS HEAD AND ARMS RESTING ON THE TABLE. HE IS OBVIOUSLY ALMOST ASLEEP. AFTER A MOMENT, THE DOOR FLAP OPENS AND CAPTAIN FABIAN ENTERS LOOKING COLD, WORRIED AND VERY TIRED. HE CAREFULLY REPLACES THE DOOR FLAP BEHIND HIM SO THAT NO LIGHT CAN ESCAPE. HEARING FABIAN ENTER, WALTERS SITS UP, LOOKS AT FABIAN AND WEARILY RUBS HIS EYES WITH AN UNCONSCIOUS MOTION. FOR A MOMENT NEITHER OF THE MEN SPEAKS. FABIAN CORSESSES TO THE STOVE AND TAKES OFF HIS HELMET.

FABIAN

Any word?

WALTERS

No, sir. Not a word.

FABIAN SITS EXHAUSTED ON A BOX NEAR THE STOVE. WALTERS RISES, STRETCHES AND RUBS HIS EYES. FOR A MOMENT HE LOOKS AT FABIAN.

WALTERS

Tired?

FABIAN NODS HIS HEAD IN AFFIRMATION. WALTERS TAKES OUT A PACK OF CIGARETTES, PUTS ONE IN HIS MOUTH AND THEN OFFERS ONE TO FABIAN. FABIAN TAKES A CIGARETTE AND ABSENTLY SEARCHES HIS POCKETS FOR A MATCH. WALTERS TAKES OUT A MATCH AND LIGHTS THEIR CIGARETTES.

FABIAN

No word!...Are the other platoons still firing?

WALTERS

No, sir. They've stopped. I called them...I guess about an

III-2

hour ago. Regiment sent down a cease fire so I called the platoons and told them to wrap it up.

THERE IS A PAUSE WHILE BOTH MEN SMOKE.

FABIAN

What time is it?

WALTERS CONSULTS HIS WRIST-WATCH.

WALTERS

Almost one-thirty, sir. Should be right. I synchronized it with regiment this morning.

FABIAN

They should be in by now. Small groups have been coming back across the lines for the past three hours. Most of them were in when I left.

WALTERS

See any of our boys?

FABIAN SHAKES HIS HEAD NEGATIVELY.

FABIAN

Stopped at the collection point on my way back here hoping to see some of them but none of them were there.

WALTERS SPEAKS WITH FALSE ASSURANCE.

WALTERS

Well, they ought to be showing up pretty soon.

FABIAN

I guess so. Did get a chance to talk to some of the others.

WALTERS

Did any of them see Jackson or Morgan...or anybody?

FABIAN

None that I talked to. But I stopped at Fox Company on my

III-3

way back and talked to Captain Hulbert. There wasn't much he could tell me. He had his company in reserve until the Chinks broke through. Then they were sent out to support Jackson. So far they haven't come back yet. Said he heard they picked up some of the platoon but he didn't know who. Just that they picked some of them up.

THERE IS A PAUSE BEFORE FABIAN SPEAKS AGAIN.

By the time his men got out there the Chinks had already passed through our position...right through Jackson and his men.

WALTERS SITS SLOWLY AT THE TABLE AS THOUGH HIS BODY HAD SUDDENLY BECOME TOO HEAVY FOR HIS LEGS TO SUPPORT. HE SITS IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SPEAKS.

WALTERS

Shall I...shall I call regiment again and see if there's any news?

FABIAN

No...it wouldn't do any good. They're so confused back there they don't know a damn thing.

THE DOOR FLAP MOVES AND BOTH MEN JUMP UP EXPECTANTLY. IT IS FERRIN WHO LOOKS WEAK FROM COLD AND EXHAUSTION. THE OTHERS SIT DOWN IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

FERRIN

Heard anything?

WALTERS

Nope.

FERRIN CROSSES TO HIS BUNK, PUTS DOWN HIS CARBINE, TAKES OFF HIS JACKET AND LIES DOWN WEARILY.

FABIAN

Where have you come from?

FERRIN

One of the O.P. lines went out up at third and there wasn't

III-4

anyone around to fix it. So I went up and fixed it myself.

FABIAN

Oh....

FERRIN

God knows, if anything is going to get done, you have to do it yourself. These damn phone lines give me a pain!

WALTERS

Oh, by the way, Captain, Colonel Bryan has called several times looking for you.

FABIAN

Did he say what he wanted?

WALTERS

No. Just that he had to see you.

FABIAN GIVES A DISINTERESTED GRUNT.

FABIAN

Humph!

THE REGIMENTAL PHONE RINGS. FABIAN RISES QUICKLY TO HIS FEET AS WALTERS GRABS THE PHONE. FERRIN DOES NOT STIR. WALTERS SPEAKS IMMEDIATELY INTO THE PHONE.

WALTERS

Green fire direction.

HE LISTENS AND THEN RELAXES IN DISAPPOINTMENT AND SPEAKS INTO THE PHONE.

Hold on.

TO FABIAN

The metro message.

FABIAN

Oh.

III-5

FABIAN DROPS HIS CIGARETTE ON THE FLOOR AND NERVOUSLY GRINDS IT OUT WITH HIS HEEL. WALTERS PICKS UP A PENCIL AND A PIECE OF PAPER FROM THE TABLE, RETURNS TO THE PHONE AND WRITES DOWN THE MESSAGE AS IT IS DICTATED TO HIM. HE SPEAKS INTO THE PHONE.

WALTERS

Okay. Go ahead.

HE PAUSES AND WRITES.

Repeat last line.

WRITES AGAIN.

Got it. Thanks.

WALTERS HANGS UP. HE STUDIES THE METRO MESSAGE FOR A MOMENT, FLIPS THE PENCIL ONTO THE TABLE AND FILES THE PAPER AWAY.

No sense working that one out. The wind's only shifted two mils and the powder temperature's still the same.

FABIAN

You won't need it. There won't be much firing tonight. I think we've all had enough for one day.

WALTERS RISES AND STRETCHES.

WALTERS

I hope so....Well...I need a cup of coffee to wake me up. How about you, sir?

FABIAN

Yes...if you've got one.

WALTERS

Ferrin.

NO RESPONSE.

Ferrin. Want a cup of mud.

FABIAN LOOKS AT FERRIN ASLEEP ON HIS BUNK.

III-6

FABIAN

Let him sleep. He probably needs it.

WALTERS CROSSES TO THE BUNKS FOR TWO CUPS.

WALTERS

We haven't any sugar.

FABIAN

We'll drink it black. It'll do us good.

WALTERS CROSSES TO THE STOVE WITH THE CUPS AND
POURS THE COFFEE. HE THEN GIVES A CUP TO FABIAN.

WALTERS

I wonder what the home-town papers will have to say about
this.

FABIAN

The usual thing.

HE TAKES THE CUP.

Thanks....Things aren't as bad as I thought they would be,
though. They were bringing in some of the wounded when I was
at the casualty collection point. There weren't as many as
I expected, but...oh God...there were enough...more than
enough. It all seemed so....

HE DOES NOT FINISH. A TRUCK IS HEARD STOPPING OUT-
SIDE. BOTH MEN LOOK TOWARD THE DOOR AND THEN AT
EACH OTHER. THEY LOOK BACK AT THE DOOR AND LISTEN
CAREFULLY. THE TRUCK IS HEARD DRIVING AWAY. BOTH
MEN RISE AND START TOWARD THE DOOR. BEFORE THEY
REACH THERE, HOWEVER, THE CANVAS IS MOVED ASIDE.
BOTH MEN STOP. MORGAN COMES SLOWLY IN AND STANDS
IN THE DOOR. HIS FATIGUES ARE WET AND MUDDY. HE
HAS A CUT ACROSS THE TOP OF ONE OF HIS HANDS. HIS
HANDS AND FACE SHOW PATCHES OF DIRT AND DRIED BLOOD.
UNDERNEATH THE DIRT AND BLOOD HIS FACE IS COLORLESS,
TIRED, DRAWN, BUT DEVOID OF ANY OTHER EXPRESSION.
HIS EYELIDS DROOP AND HIS EYES ARE DEAD AND EXPRES-
SIONLESS AS THOUGH THEY HAD LOST THEIR ABILITY TO
FOCUS...AS THOUGH THEY NO LONGER WANTED TO SEE.

III-7

FABIAN AND WALTERS REACT WITH RELIEF AND CONCERN.

FABIAN

Morgan!

WALTERS

Morgan! Am I glad to see you, boy!

MORGAN DOES NOT MOVE. FABIAN AND WALTERS WATCH HIM WITH APPREHENSION.

FABIAN

Where are the others?

STILL MORGAN DOES NOT MOVE.

WALTERS

Where are the others, Morgan?

FABIAN

He must be nearly frozen. Help me get him over to the stove.

FABIAN AND WALTERS MAKE A MOVE TOWARD MORGAN BUT MORGAN STARTS TO MOVE ON HIS OWN POWER TOWARD THE STOVE. THE OTHERS FOLLOW HIM CLOSELY.

WALTERS

Where's your jacket, Morgan?

MORGAN ANSWERS INCOHERENTLY. THROUGHOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE FOLLOWING SCENE HE IS INCOHERENT. GRADUALLY, AS THE SCENE PROGRESSES, HE BECOMES MORE COHERENT.

MORGAN

I don't know....I don't know....Must have lost it somewhere. ...I just want to sit....

HIS VOICE TRAILS OFF INTO NOTHINGNESS. HE SITS WEARILY ON A BOX BY THE STOVE AND STARES IN FRONT OF HIM.

III-8

WALTERS

Where are the others?

HE WAITS FOR A RESPONSE FROM MORGAN AND THEN TRIES AGAIN.

What happened, Morgan?

MORGAN DOES NOT RESPOND. FABIAN WATCHES HIM CLOSELY.

FABIAN

Maybe you'd rather not talk about it now.

MORGAN

I'm all right....I'm all right....I just want to sit for a minute.

FABIAN AND WALTERS ARE SILENT FOR A MOMENT. THEN WALTERS TAKES A HOLD OF MORGAN'S WOUNDED HAND AND INSPECTS IT.

WALTERS

Look at his hand, sir.

FABIAN LOOKS AT THE HAND.

FABIAN

You'd better get the medic.

MORGAN SLOWLY WITHDRAWS HIS WOUNDED HAND AND COVERS IT WITH HIS OTHER.

MORGAN

I'm okay, I tell you.

WALTERS

Should I get him some coffee, sir? It'd warm him up.

FABIAN

No....Let's leave him alone for a minute.

III-9

WALTERS

But...oh, well....Do you think we ought to get the medic then?

FABIAN

Wait a minute or two.

FABIAN LOOKS AT MORGAN, STARTS TO SAY SOMETHING AND THEN CHANGES HIS MIND. WALTERS SPEAKS TO HIDE HIS HELPLESSNESS.

WALTERS

Well....

MORGAN STARTS TO SPEAK. HIS VOICE BLURTS OUT AND THEN FALLS AWAY TO ALMOST A FLAT DRONE.

MORGAN

We fired as long as we could...but the rounds started coming in so fast we had to take cover. That's when it all startedThey just kept coming in...more and more.

MORGAN PAUSES AND THE OTHERS WAIT IN ANTICIPATION.

A piece of one got Thompson in the chest...and he just sat there in the creek bed...not making a sound. I tried to help him...but...God, he was such a funny-colored green. He just sat there...just sat...not a sound. Couldn't even get the medics...all the lines were out.

FABIAN

Morgan...?

MORGAN GOES ON UNAWARE OF THE INTERRUPTION.

MORGAN

I heard someone else crying...but I couldn't find him. I looked...and then he stopped. Someone from a rifle company slid down the ditch bank and asked me where Lieutenant Jackson was. I couldn't see him. I didn't know....I didn't know and he crawled away.

FABIAN MOVES INTO MORGAN AND SPEAKS QUIETLY AND DISTINCTLY.

III-10

FABIAN

What about Jackson? Where is he, Morgan?

MORGAN GIVES NO INDICATION THAT HE HAS HEARD FABIAN.

MORGAN

He asked me where the Lieutenant was and I didn't know...I didn't know....

FABIAN INTERRUPTS AGAIN MORE INSISTENTLY.

FABIAN

Morgan, where's Jackson?

MORGAN IS JARRED INTO REALITY BY FABIAN'S INSISTENCE. HE ANSWERS QUICKLY.

MORGAN

Out there! Out there!

MORGAN PAUSES AND LAPSES BACK INTO HIS STUPOR.

Jackson jumped into the creek bed. He told me...told me....

HE PAUSES AS IF TRYING TO REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS THAT JACKSON HAD TOLD HIM. HE CONTINUES.

The Chinks had broken through our lines. And he told me...he said...gave me his maps and overlays. He told me to take all my papers and try to get back to our lines...get back and send help. Burn them...he told me to burn the papers if they got too close to me....I ran...ran...down the creek bed. I ran....

MORGAN STOPS. THE OTHERS WAIT FOR HIM TO GO ON, BUT HE DOES NOT. AFTER A MOMENT, WALTERS SPEAKS TO FABIAN.

WALTERS

Is he all right, sir?

FABIAN

As right as he can be.

III-11

WALTERS

That hand. Shall I call the medic?

BEFORE FABIAN CAN ANSWER, MORGAN CONTINUES.

MORGAN

Jackson blew up the mortars....There were some explosions back at the platoon. It scared me....I couldn't run... couldn't. I turned around. But it was Jackson...blew up our mortars...so the Chinks wouldn't get them.

MORGAN SIGHS AND LOWERS HIS HEAD INTO HIS ARMS.
FABIAN WATCHES HIM FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SPEAKS.

FABIAN

Why don't you lie down and rest, Morgan? We can talk about this some other time.

WALTERS

Might make you feel better.

MORGAN SHAKES HIS HEAD NEGATIVELY.

MORGAN

Uh-uh. I'll just sit....

WALTERS

Maybe we ought to put him to bed, sir.

MORGAN

I could see Jackson and Adams and some of the others crouching behind the paddy dyke...shooting. God!...God! The Chinks were coming around the ridge...coming...hundreds of them it seemed...coming. I laid there...a long time...laid there and listened to them shooting. Then I ran again...kept running. I could hear them behind me. But I couldn't look around. I had to burn the maps...but they'd see the smoke. They'd see me...they'd see me. I could hear them. They weren't hardly shooting anymore. I could hear them yelling. Some of the Chinks were running down the valley. They'd see me...I knew they'd see me. Fell down in the creek and stayed there. Then I crawled under some willows and laid still...

still as I could. Didn't dare move....Didn't move. Didn't breathe.

FABIAN

Morgan, let me....

MORGAN GOES ON UNAWARE OF FABIAN.

MORGAN

They kept coming. The Chinks were running in the valley. I could hear them running in the weeds. I heard them in the mud. God! I was cold...cold all over! Cold and I couldn't move. One of them stood over me on the bank. I stopped breathing....I could feel him there...like he was touching me. God, I was cold. Waited and waited...and waited.

MORGAN STOPS. THE OTHERS WAIT FOR A MOMENT AND THEN WALTERS SPEAKS.

WALTERS

How did you get that? Your hand?

HE WAITS FOR A RESPONSE THAT DOES NOT COME. HE REPEATS HIS QUESTION.

Morgan. Your hand. How did it happen?

MORGAN LOOKS AT HIS HAND CALMLY AND THEN SPEAKS MORE CALMLY AND WITH MORE CONTROL.

MORGAN

I don't know....I don't know....I waited. Then they started yelling again...and shooting. And all hell broke loose. I could hear them shooting and yelling and running. A long time I laid there. Then...I heard voices....Someone was shouting...in English...but I couldn't be sure. And I couldn't be sure. And I couldn't move. A lot of men were rushing by. Someone went by me in the creek...and I didn't move. The voices had gone up the valley...and the rounds were coming in again. I laid there for a long, long time...and, when they stopped, I ran....I ran again down the creek bed. I...I saw someone coming and had to hide. It was one of our men and I yelled to him....Scared the hell out of him. Said he was from Fox Company and was going up to help Jackson. I went back with him. I had to go back....I had to. I burned my

III-13

maps and papers and went back out there with him. They were still fighting...and it took us a long time. It got dark.

FABIAN

Did you see any of them, Morgan? Did you see any of the platoon?

MORGAN

Some of them were still up there. After it quieted down, I walked around to see if I could find any of them. But it was getting so dark...and I couldn't see very well. The lieutenant and from Fox Company wouldn't let me look....

FABIAN

Morgan, did you see any of them?

MORGAN IS MORE COHERENT NOW BUT HIS VOICE IS STILL TIRED AND FLAT.

MORGAN

Carlyle and Williams were with Fox Company. I saw them. I could only talk to them for a minute. I was looking...but that damn lieutenant from Fox Company kept sending me back.

FABIAN

And Jackson? Was he there?

MORGAN

Right where I last saw him...by the paddy dyke. He was shot up pretty bad. They couldn't move him, so I stayed there with him. That lieutenant tried to make me go away...but I couldn't. To die out there all alone...I couldn't let him do that to Jackson. He...Jackson looked...I don't know quite what it wasJackson didn't look like himself anymore. He looked...lost and unhappy...like he needed someone by him. So I couldn't leave him. He kept looking at me...but I don't think he even saw me. Only once. Once he saw me and he said something...."Tell the Captain I was right," he said. Then...in a little while he died without even looking at me again and I was glad it was all over for him.

FABIAN IS VISIBLY AFFECTED AND WALTERS RETIRES AS THOUGH HE DID NOT CARE TO HEAR ANY MORE. FABIAN

III-14

SPEAKS AS THOUGH HE IS AFRAID OF THE ANSWER HE
MIGHT RECEIVE.

FABIAN

And the others?

MORGAN

All dead...or missing.

FABIAN MOVES AWAY IN SILENCE. MORGAN GOES ON.

MORGAN

I stayed until the medics came out to pick up the dead and wounded. Then I went back to the collection point with Fox Company. Stayed there about an hour...hoping some of the platoon would come in. They wanted to fix my hand but they were so busy. I walked around...looking...but I couldn't find anybody. Then they brought in Coletti...wounded...not bad though. Just in the leg. When I had a chance, I talked to him and he said Brady and one other was brought back wounded. Brady...pretty bad. Then they put Coletti in a truck and took him back down the line. So I left and caught a ride back here.

MORGAN SITS WITH NO DESIRE TO SAY ANY MORE. FABIAN WATCHES HIM. WALTERS LOOKS AT MORGAN NOT KNOWING QUITE WHAT TO DO OR SAY. THEN HE CROSSES TO ONE OF THE BUNKS AND PICKS UP A CANTEEN CUP. HE CROSSES TO THE STOVE, POURS SOME COFFEE INTO THE CUP AND HOLDS IT OUT TO MORGAN. MORGAN DOES NOT SEE THE CUP. FINALLY, WALTERS PLACES THE CUP IN MORGAN'S HAND.

WALTERS

Drink it. It'll make you feel better.

MORGAN MERELY LOOKS AT THE CUP AND DOES NOT MOVE.

FABIAN

Walters, get the medic to dress his hand and give him something to make him sleep.

MORGAN

I don't want anything. I'll be all right. Just let me alone

and I'll be all right.

MORGAN TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND LOWERS HIS HEAD ONTO HIS KNEES. HE GASPS A FEW TIMES AS THOUGH TRYING TO CRY WITHOUT SUCCESS. FABIAN WATCHES HIM FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SPEAKS.

FABIAN

Get the medic anyway.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

WALTERS CROSSES TO HIS BUNK FOR HIS JACKET AS THE DOOR FLAP OPENS AND COLONEL BRYAN ENTERS.

BRYAN

Here you are. I've been looking high and low for you all night. Can't you stay in one place?

EVERYONE STOPS AND LOOKS AT BRYAN. FABIAN STIFFENS. HE SPEAKS WITHOUT TAKING HIS EYES OFF OF BRYAN.

FABIAN

Walters, on second thought, take Morgan down to the medic's hootchie.

WALTERS LOOKS FROM FABIAN TO BRYAN AND BACK AGAIN.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

FABIAN SEES FERRIN ON HIS BUNK.

FABIAN

Ferrin.

NO RESPONSE.

Ferrin! Get up!

FERRIN STIRS.

III-16

FERRIN

Huh?

FABIAN

Go with Walters. He needs your help.

FERRIN STANDS UP SLEEPILY.

FERRIN

Yes, sir.

WALTERS TAKES THE CUP FROM MORGAN AND PUTS IT ON THE TABLE AND HELPS HIM TO HIS FEET AS FERRIN FUMBLES WITH HIS JACKET SLEEPILY.

BRYAN

What's this?

FABIAN

I'm sending him to the medics.

FERRIN SEES MORGAN.

FERRIN

Morgan!

FERRIN CROSSES TO WALTERS AND HELPS TO SUPPORT MORGAN.

BRYAN

My jeep's right outside if you need it, Sergeant. Just tell the driver to take you down there and come back.

WALTERS NODS HIS REPLY TO BRYAN AS HE AND FERRIN HELP MORGAN TO THE DOOR. WALTERS LOOKS AGAIN FROM FABIAN TO BRYAN AND THEN HE AND FERRIN EXIT WITH MORGAN BETWEEN THEM.

BRYAN

Dammit, Fabian! Did it ever occur to you that I might like to know what's going on? I've been chasing you around from one

III-17

spot to another all night long. I've just now come from the collection point....

FABIAN

Then you know about Jackson?

BRYAN

Yes, I just heard....It's too damn bad. I hate to see that happen. He was a good man.

FABIAN

He was.

BRYAN

What about the rest of his platoon?

FABIAN

You just saw what's left of it. The platoon's practically wiped out.

THIS TAKES THE WIND OUT OF BRYAN'S SAIL.

BRYAN

Oh....

FABIAN

There's possibly six or seven of them left. Less than a squad, Bryan. And three or four of them are certain casualties.

BRYAN

My God! That bad?

FABIAN

That bad!

THERE IS A PAUSE WHILE FABIAN MAKES AN EFFORT TO CONTROL HIMSELF AND BRYAN TRIES TO DIGEST THIS BIT OF BITTER INFORMATION. FINALLY, BRYAN SPEAKS SLOWLY AND SOFTLY.

BRYAN

Believe me, Fabian, I'm sorry. Seven you say?

III-18

FABIAN

Six or seven.

BRYAN

Humph!...That's....It...it's too damn bad that such things have to happen.

FABIAN

Goddamn bad! But the important thing is why...why...why!

BRYAN FEELS HIMSELF ON THE DEFENSIVE.

BRYAN

I know, Fabian. I know. I wish there were some way to tell you how sorry I am. I mean that. I know you, Fabian. And I think I know what it means to you. It's not easy for you.

FABIAN

You're right. It isn't.

A LOOK AT FABIAN CONVINCES BRYAN THAT HE MUST SOMEHOW JUSTIFY HIMSELF.

BRYAN

It's not easy for any of us. Things like this...losing Jackson...and his men...they're hard to take. Damn hard. But in times like these, we have to learn to expect it. We have to expect it and live with it. And we have to live with ourselves, too.

HIS VOICE TAKES ON THE QUALITY OF A FATHER TALKING TO HIS CONFUSED SON.

Let me tell you, Fabian. You can't take things like this too much to heart. Believe me, I know that. That may sound hard and unfeeling, but if you sit down and think about it seriously day and day out, you're lost. You're completely lost. Losing men like Jackson and the rest...that's not something you can smile at. But, believe me, you can't think about it. Accept it and don't think about it.

FABIAN

It's not quite that easy, Bryan. Sometimes you're forced to

think about it.

BRYAN

Maybe. But is it our place to do the thinking and the worrying about the Jacksons and the others? Worrying ties us up in knots...and we've got too much to do...too many important things that have to be done. Fabian, I know you can't ignore a thing like this. No man can. But you can't allow yourself to brood about it either. The only thing you possibly can do is just accept it...accept it as inevitable.

FABIAN

Accept it.

BRYAN

Yes, accept it. This isn't anything unique or out of the ordinary. Losses occur every day. It is inevitable. You've got to believe that because it's a fact you can't escape. Then take a good look at the picture as a whole, decide what was accomplished and weigh that against what was lost. Get yourself a clear perspective. Then you begin to realize that your own loss--great as it may seem to you personally--is pretty small and unimportant as compared with what was gained. Then think of the gain and know it was worth it. Think of the gain and accept the loss.

FABIAN

That still leaves the most important question unanswered. Was the loss really a necessary loss?

BRYAN

Fabian....

FABIAN GOES RIGHT ON.

FABIAN

Bryan, the end has to somehow justify the means. No accomplishment is worth unnecessary, wanton loss. So I find it impossible to justify today. How can you classify today as a gain? We lost all the way around by any standard...any standard but your own.

BRYAN INTERRUPTS AGAIN WITH A WARNING.

III-20

BRYAN

Fabian, I don't....

FABIAN CONTINUES, IGNORING BRYAN'S INTERRUPTION.

FABIAN

No matter how you choose to look at it, there can be only one possible gain made out there today. And that's the triumph of your own ego and ambition, the great and questionable satisfaction you got from manipulating your chessmen.

BRYAN'S ANGER RISES.

BRYAN

Goddam it, Fabian. You're apt to go too far! You'll shut your mouth and not say anymore, if you know what's good for you. You're in hot water as it is.

FABIAN

You've got your wires crossed, Bryan. You know goddam well who's in hot water. It's your own hide that's going to be boiled, not mine. Don't fool yourself. I know as well as you that this is no social visit.

BRYAN

What are you driving at?

FABIAN

Your reason for searching the countryside for me tonight. You wanted to make damn sure I hadn't opened my mouth and said something that would incriminate you. And you want to be just as sure that my mouth stays shut for good.

BRYAN

Fabian, I don't know what it is....

FABIAN

Come off it, Bryan. You know only too well what I'm talking about. It's my guess that division has been burning up the wires to your phone and you're worried.

III-21

BRYAN

As a matter of fact, division has been calling. Naturally they're concerned.

FABIAN

I'll bet they are!

BRYAN

But that doesn't mean that I have anything to worry about. Sure, we lost a few men. But nothing in the world is accomplished without a few losses. There hasn't been a battle in history where someone didn't get killed. Do you think we'd be as far as we are right now if all we considered was our losses? We have to take our losses in our stride. The boys at division know that.

FABIAN

Necessary losses, yes.

BRYAN

Any kind of losses. Who's to say what's necessary and what isn't?

FABIAN

Your own conscience.

BRYAN

Conscience be damned! A loss is a loss and we can't waste our time crying about it.

FABIAN

You're whistling in the dark, Bryan.

BRYAN

To hell. I'm not worried.

FABIAN

Then let me give you something to think about. I learned something today, Bryan. I learned that it's possible that a man cannot tell the difference between fighting a war and

satisfying his own ambition.

BRYAN

What do you mean?

FABIAN

I mean you! You've forgotten how to be human. You're dead inside. You're a parasitic vegetable that feeds on man. You can send a platoon of men on an impossible mission with a two-penny promise of success because that's the way you live. You don't give a damn for human life. You don't give a damn about winning a war. Your only concern is Number One. You're fighting for a desk at division headquarters and four stars on your shoulder while the rest of us are fighting for our lives. That's another thing you've overlooked. It's our lives we're fighting for. A soldier never fights for a cause. Once he gets anywhere near a battlefield, causes are forgotten like so many empty words. He has one purpose in fighting then...to save his own hide. And once he begins to see that you are a threat to that precious hide, he'll find a way to get rid of you. Then you'll learn that they're not chessmen for you to play with...not chessmen at all. Someday when one of them shoots you in the back.

BRYAN APPROACHES FABIAN MENACINGLY.

BRYAN

Don't try to corner me, Fabian.

FABIAN

It's too late, Bryan. You've cornered yourself.

BRYAN

Don't try it!

FABIAN

Maybe you didn't understand me, Bryan. I said I'm through. And I intend to see to it that you're through, too.

BRYAN SPEAKS THREATENINGLY.

BRYAN

My God, Fabian, you're a fool! What do you take me for? Do

you imagine that I'm going to stand by and watch you destroy in one night what I've worked for all my life?

FABIAN

You have no choice.

BRYAN

Haven't I? This is my life. This is all I have and not you or anybody like you is going to take it away from me. I've fought all my life to get where I am and I intend to keep fighting. What can you know about my life? I've been kicked and knifed in the back and tromped on by more people than I like to remember. But it didn't take me long to learn to kick back. I learned every trick in the books and then a few more besides. I've taken more crap than you could even imagine existed. But I've only taken it because I've known that someday it would be worth it all. Someday I would be on the top of the heap myself. I'm getting there and there isn't anyone big enough to stop me. Not you or anyone your size. I've fought too hard for what I've got to turn tail and run. I couldn't turn back now even if I wanted to. I've sacrificed too much already. And I'll make it because I'm willing to sacrifice everything I've got to get where I want to go.

FABIAN

I've seen the sacrifices you can make. But you're sacrificing lives that aren't yours to give.

BRYAN

Fabian, don't get in my way. I can break you right in two. I wouldn't have to think twice before sacrificing you.

FABIAN

You're a bigger bastard than I thought. It's no use, Bryan. I'm not one of your chessmen.

BRYAN FLARES UP ANGRILY.

BRYAN

To hell with your chessmen! You've had your say. Now I'll have mine. Evidently, you have no idea how goddam close you are to a courts-martial.

FABIAN IS COMPLETELY SURPRISED.

III-24

FABIAN

A courts-martial. What is this...your scare act?

BRYAN RELAXES AND ENJOYS BEING ON THE OFFENSIVE.

BRYAN

It's a simple statement of fact.

FABIAN REALIZES THE IMPLICATION OF BRYAN'S CHARGE.

FABIAN

Oh, I see. This is your method of sacrificing me.

BRYAN

Call it what you like...it boils down to this. It's really you who hasn't got a choice.

FABIAN

You've given me a choice. Either shut up or face a courts-martial. Little Napoleon!

BRYAN BRISTLES AT "LITTLE NAPOLEON."

BRYAN

You son-of-a-bitch!

FABIAN

You're crazy! Completely mad! You couldn't make a charge stick!

BRYAN

Try it and find out! You've made it very simple for me. Refusing to take orders.

FABIAN

What?

BRYAN

Two days ago you refused to send a platoon out to 197.

III-25

FABIAN

And I was right!

BRYAN

You messed up your recon and put your mortars down in a rice paddy where they wouldn't be of any use to us or anybody else.

FABIAN

Where else could I put them?

BRYAN

Your communications was poorly handled. Vital lines went out before the action even began. Earlier today you deserted your post at the O.P. and came back here.

FABIAN

What good was I up there?

BRYAN

And while you were gone, all hell broke loose and one of your platoons was wiped out. I called down orders for vital fire and you refused to acknowledge them.

FABIAN

But....

BRYAN

All communications failed. Then you cap it off by hurling insults at me.

FABIAN

There's a logical explanation for every one of your charges.

BRYAN

Even the insults? And a charge of desertion is no light matter.

FABIAN

Desertion hell!

III-26

BRYAN

And how would you account for your disappearance this evening?

FABIAN

I wouldn't have to account for it. I think it's plain enough that I was concerned about the platoon and trying my best to find out what had become of it?

BRYAN

Plain to you I suppose. I wonder if it would be so plain in a courts-martial hearing. But it's really the charge of desertion that interests me. Deserting your post in a time of emergency.

FABIAN

But, surely you don't think....

BRYAN

It's not so important what I think. It could look suspiciously like an act of cowardice.

FABIAN IS MOMENTARILY STUNNED. HE PAUSES A MOMENT AND THEN SPEAKS.

FABIAN

I'm beginning to understand. It's really not so important what you think. The important thing is what you'll say.

BRYAN SMILES IN SATISFACTION THAT FABIAN HAS UNDERSTOOD.

BRYAN

I wouldn't have to say much. The other officers and the observers at the O.P. could verify what I say. And your own men working here.

FABIAN

My men? Suppose they support me?

BRYAN

How could they? You see, I have faith in you, Fabian, and

your conduct as an officer. You wouldn't be discussing your problems with enlisted men.

FABIAN

What about my officers?

BRYAN

Which one would be concerned?

FABIAN

Jackson.

BRYAN

Exactly. Jackson.

FABIAN STOPS REALIZING HE'S FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE.

FABIAN

Bryan....

BRYAN

Who do you think the others will believe? You or me?

FABIAN

It won't work, Bryan. I won't be your scape-goat.

BRYAN

You're not leaving me much of a choice.

BRYAN PAUSES WAITING FOR A RESPONSE THAT DOES NOT COME.

Is that all you have to say?

FABIAN TAKES HIS TIME TO ANSWER BUT WHEN HE DOES THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HE REALLY MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.

FABIAN

Yes.

BRYAN LOOKS AT FABIAN FOR A MOMENT AND THEN STARTS TOWARD HIM.

BRYAN

You just signed your own courts-martial. Get out of my way.

BRYAN PUSHES FABIAN ASIDE AS HE MOVES TOWARD THE DOOR. HE IS STOPPED BY A BLOW FROM FABIAN WHICH SENDS HIM REELING.

BRYAN

You bastard!

FABIAN

I can't be expended, Bryan. It's not that simple. I'm not a symbol....I'm not one of your chessmen.

BRYAN RUSHES AT FABIAN KNOCKING HIM INTO THE DOOR. FABIAN DRAWS HIS REVOLVER AS BRYAN COMES AT HIM. THEY STRUGGLE AT CLOSE QUARTERS FOR A MOMENT. THEN THE REVOLVER GOES OFF. BRYAN RECOILS AND STAGGERS BACKWARDS DOUBLING UP IN PAIN, A LOOK OF SURPRISE AND HORROR ON HIS FACE.

BRYAN

My God! My God!

BRYAN SLIDES ALONG THE TABLE AND DROPS TO THE FLOOR. HE IS DEAD. WALTERS RUSHES THROUGH THE DOOR EXCITEDLY AND STOPS ABRUPTLY WHEN HE SEES THE BODY OF BRYAN. AFTER A MOMENT FABIAN MECHANICALLY HANDS THE REVOLVER TO WALTERS.

FABIAN

Call General Langley. Tell him what happened.

SLOWLY WALTERS RECOVERS HIMSELF AND BEGINS TO FUNCTION.

WALTERS

I didn't see.

HE PAUSES AND THEN GOES ON.

III-29

We've got to get him out of here before his driver comes back with Ferrin and Morgan. I'll get a jeep. We can take him down the road somewhere and leave him.

FABIAN

Call General Langley!

FABIAN CROSSES TO BRYAN AND STANDS OVER HIM. THERE IS SILENCE FOR A MOMENT.

WALTERS

Yes, sir.

WALTERS CROSSES TO THE PHONE AND PICKS IT UP. HE STANDS WATCHING FABIAN. FABIAN LOOKS AT THE BODY OF BRYAN AND SPEAKS.

FABIAN

I am you, Bryan. I'm no better than you. No better than you.

WALTERS LAYS THE REVOLVER ON THE TABLE AND BEGINS TO CRANK THE PHONE BELL.

THE CURTAIN FALLS